

interaction



FALL ISSUE 1998

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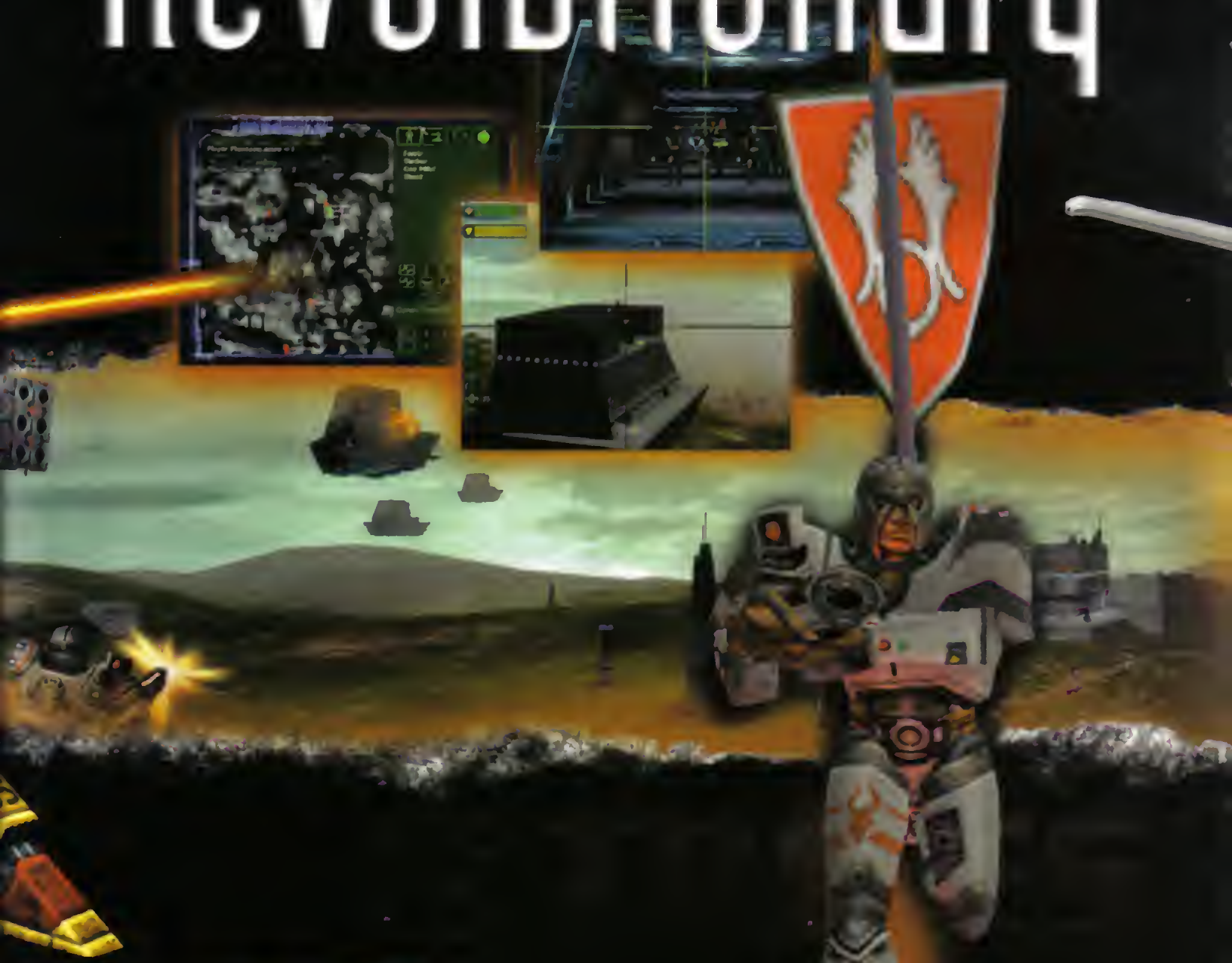


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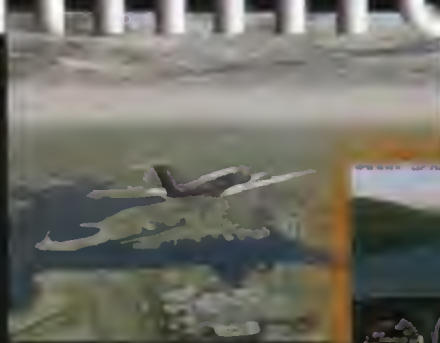
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That Good Old 486

By Steven Bryan Bieler



A common lament these days is that system requirements keep rising. That 486 you spent your hard-earned money on won't run the new

generation of games. That's a shame, because older machines are still fine for such everyday applications as Word and Excel. Your car isn't obsolete in 18 months. Why is your computer?

The answer is games. Word and Excel don't exactly offer a multimedia experience. Games do. Games utilize the latest 3D graphics, digital sound, and resource-gobbling AIs. Games must respond instantly to joysticks, wheels, and pedals. Not to mention the horsepower you need if you're playing online.

Then there are the gamers, who demand ever-increasing realism in graphics and gameplay. The game companies respond, raising the bar, and the cycle begins again.

But that good old 486 is still good. It'll still run many games, even games being produced today. Don't chuck it—buy a newer machine and network them.

In this issue of *InterAction Magazine* you can read about games that are helping to raise the bar I mentioned above. Chris Hudak rides his HERC into No Man's Land in *Starsiege* and gets taken apart at the molecular level. Ouch. Mark Walker briefs us on another game set in the *Starsiege* universe, *Starsiege TRIBES*, then travels back through time for *Caesar III*. Geoff Keighley brings us up to date on *Half-Life*.

Fans of fantasy adventure series will have a field day with *Quest for Glory V*, *Mask of Eternity*, *Return to Krondor*, and *Lords of Magic: Special Edition*. But fans of all types should enjoy this issue, with its range of stories from *Grand Prix Legends* to *Print Artist Plotinum*. Not to mention our usual features. Enjoy.

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WOODO 2





y wife and I have always enjoyed playing your adventure games. My wife became pregnant and we found out we were having a boy. We were having a difficult time figuring out a name for him until we played *Torin's Passage*. Both of us wanted a unique name for our son. We both liked the name *Torin* so much, that is what we decided to name him. Thanks for the inspiration.

Mark & Julie Smith
via email

Congratulations on the birth of Baby Torin! You really made Al Lowe's day. (He's particularly fond of his Torin, too.) Though you're probably glad you weren't playing The Adventures of Willy Beamish or Freddie Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist while you were pregnant! Readers who'd like to meet young Torin Smith can do so at www.bitstorm.net/wrang/tor8.jpg.



just received your magazine in the mail today. After opening it, within two minutes, my dog got sick and vomited on the floor. I got nauseous, and my wife developed a tremendous headache as well as being sick to her stomach.

I don't know whether it is the ink or the paper, but this mag smells like a cross between rotten eggs and muriatic acid. You need to find a different publisher and invest a few more cents in a quality paper and ink. I am sending this to the Hawaii Health Lab for further analysis. If I figure out the problem, I will let you know.

Manny Hall
via email

Mr. Hall, if you're still out there, please write and let us know that you, your wife, and your dog are OK.



We received this letter from Mr. & Mrs. Vincent Kassab of Williamsville, NY. Here is the Official Word:

"Periodically, Senior Management meets to discuss upcoming development projects. I can guarantee that Space Quest 7 will be one of the titles on our agenda, given the deluge of email that we have been receiving over the last six months.

"Thanks for your continued interest. Your opinions do matter and have a significant impact on our development decisions. Unfortunately, there are many other business issues that must be addressed before Space Quest 7 can become a reality."

—Craig Alexander
General Manager, Yosemite Entertainment



hen I first heard about *Half-Life*, I was holding my breath for its release in the summer of '97. Then I held my breath for the last quarter of the same year. Then I stopped holding my breath and just plain waited for the April '98 release. Then I heard it was going to be late summer of '98. I bet you know how I felt at that news. Now I'm thinking I'll see the first signs of it on the shelves sometime in '99. I worked up \$60 to buy this game, now I got the itchy spending fingers. I might spend my cash on a (GASP) Microsoft product. I hope it gets released real soon.

But I can see a plus side to this. A game is finished only when it is finished, not when the deadline rolls by. Hats off to you guys for developing a game to its fullest before releasing, despite a gamer uprising.

MontyThree
via email

You're absolutely right—a game is finished only when it's finished. (Imagine how anxious WE are to see Half-Life!) Thanks for your patience, and if you do buy from Microsoft, I'll stop running your letters.



find the title for the *Trophy Bass* article [Summer 1998] to be especially offensive.

The author no doubt intended "ROW vs. WADE" to be a clever pun, or play on words. I for one found it to be extremely insensitive. The impact of the *Roe v. Wade* decision regarding the rights of women to have abortions continues to be a highly controversial, volatile issue in this country. To even imply that this momentous decision and its aftermath are undeserving of serious consideration is an indication that Sierra On-Line is a sexist organization. I, for one, have been a Sierra gamer for many years, and have expected a little more class from you folks. Don't let me down.

NoOcean
via email

No two people are ever going to agree that a particular joke is funny. However, to think that we're making any kind of statement about abortion in an article about catching fish is, well, silly.



just wanted to let you know about an error in your magazine which caused me problems. After being more than pleased with *Trophy Bass 2*, I was reading your article in the Summer 1998 *InterAction* on *Trophy Rivers*. [In the caption] on page 59 it states, "With 20-plus lakes and rivers, and more than 25 species of fish, *Trophy Rivers* will keep you fishing year-round." I immediately ran down to my local software shop to buy a copy and I didn't read the box. I was more than a little disappointed to find that it only had five rivers. I tried to return it because of the misprint but they wouldn't return it. As I own probably 75% of everything you release, I was a little disappointed.

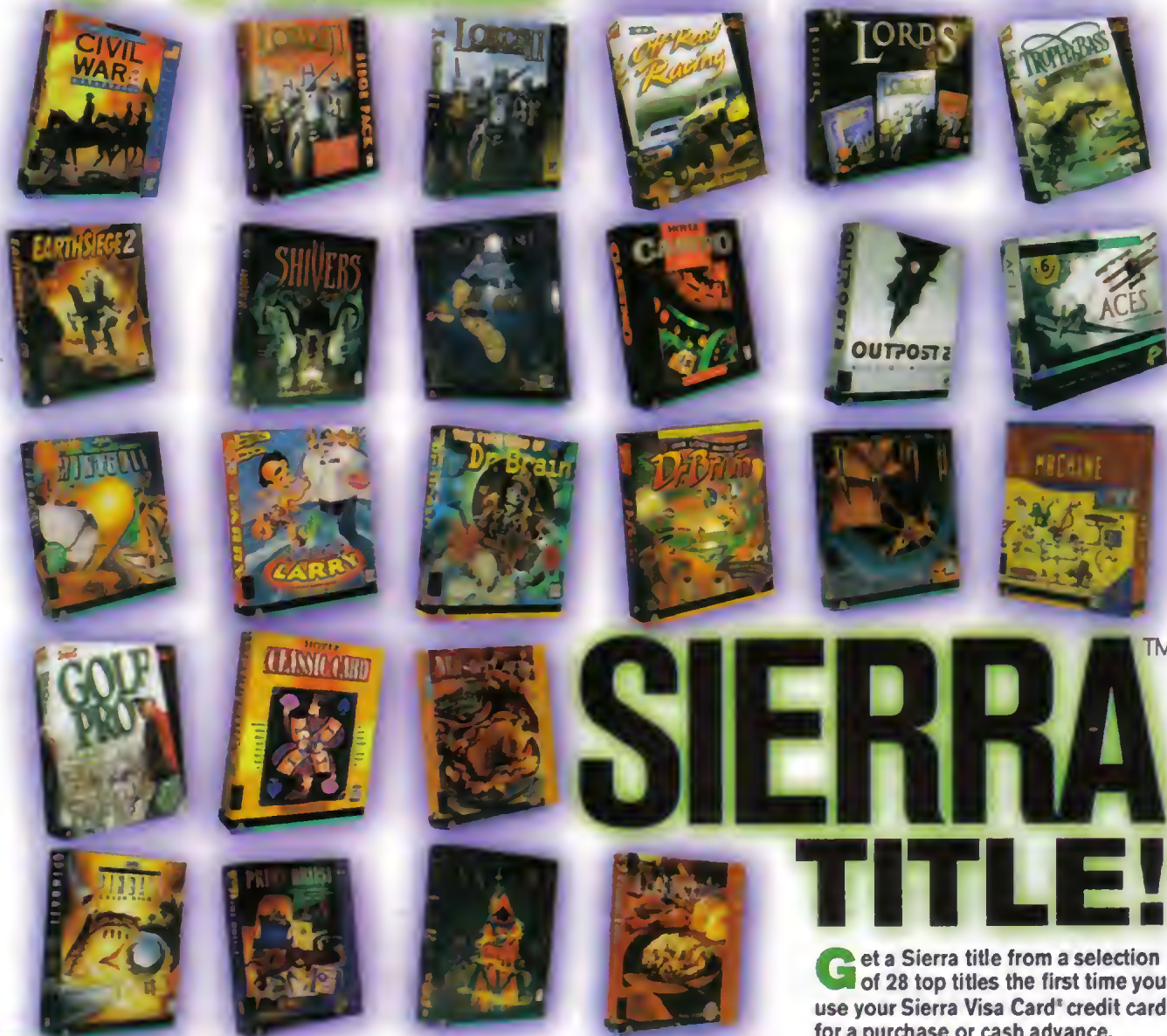
Kris J. Wandro
via email

Very often, InterAction goes to the printer long before a product is set to ship. In that time, features can change—they can be added, subtracted, or just disappear. That's what happened with the misinformation in our caption. We were working from old information. (This didn't have to cause you problems, by the way—a warranty states that you can return any Sierra product to Sierra within 30 days for a full refund. No questions asked.)

Questions? Concerns? Kudos? Write!

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Conquering the Fear of Playing Online

There are a couple of issues regarding online gaming that many rookies need to feel comfortable with before they'll even consider giving it a try.

The challenge of pitting yourself against living, breathing, thinking beings who can plot to beat/conquer/destroy your virtual persona may sound intimidating at first, but once you experience it, it quickly becomes addictive. Many gamers have sworn off computer-generated opponents until software developers can convincingly mimic human adversaries (hopefully in the near future). They love the convenience: online gaming is one of the only places where human opponents can be found 24 hours a day, seven days a week—without leaving your home!

But what will it cost me?

The second (and perhaps biggest) issue confronting the online-gaming novice is cost. The pricing plans employed by online-enabled, air-combat flight simulations are excellent examples that illustrate the whole spectrum used by the online-game industry. Basically, online pricing plans can be broken down into four categories: hourly, flat rate/subscription, free retail, and free.

At the very top of the cost pyramid are the games that charge by the hour. iMagic Online's

(www.imagiconline.com) World War II simulation, *WorBirds*, charges a \$1.99 hourly fee, but initial blocks of time are offered at reduced rates (hours do not carry over from month to month). If you do the math, depending on how addicted you become with games that charge hourly fees, this route can become quite expensive.

The flat-rate pricing model that's used with Kesmai Studios' *Air Warrior 3* (WWI, WWII, and the Korean War) on GameStorm (www.gamestorm.com) costs \$9.95 per month for unlimited play. (All other GameStorm games are included under the same flat rate.) Microsoft's *Fighter Ace* (WWII) uses a variation of the flat rate on the Internet Gaming Zone (www.zone.com). There are also \$9.95 monthly subscriptions for unlimited gameplay, but an optional single-day subscription (\$1.95) buys 24 hours of unlimited gaming.

Buying NovaLogic's *F22 Raptor* (a sim of America's newest jet fighter) at your local software store gives you unlimited, free game play on its NovaWorld server (www.novaworld.com). This is free retail.

"Free" Is tough to beat


Finally, there are games that are offered free of charge for a limited time, and some that are always free—generally card and board games found on sites such as The Internet Gaming Zone, at Yahoo (play.yahoo.com), and on

Sierra's World Opponent Network (www.won.net). SimGuild (www.simguild.com) is offering its *Flying Circus* (WWI) sim for free during the game's beta-test cycle. In exchange for free gaming, you deal with the game's bugs. Internet access is required. (A credit card is also useful for fast sign-up to the various gaming services.) So if you don't already have Internet access, you'll have to add in that cost as well.

There are other factors besides price to consider. Some argue that, just like everything else, "you get what you pay for." Although this adage isn't always true, higher-

"Online gaming is one of the only places where human opponents can be found 24 hours a day, seven days a week—without leaving your home!"

priced games generally tend to benefit from quicker development and feature-update cycles, while free and flat-rate services tend to be relatively stagnant. But the key word here is "relatively." Online games by nature tend to update at a much-accelerated rate compared to their retail-only cousins.

Regardless of pricing schemes, competition in the online gaming industry is fierce. Free trials ranging from one day to one month are everywhere. You've got nothing to lose—jump in and have fun! 

Ben Chiu, a licensed pilot and notionally known simulations columnist, is the author of seven flight-simulation books.



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No Fear and No Frostbite

WINTER IS COMING AND THE ski season is about to begin. For those of us who enjoy skiing but who don't enjoy running into trees, *Skiing '99* looks like the lift ticket to a pain-free ride downhill.

This new entry in the Sierra Sports lineup (successor to 1997's *Front Page Sports: Ski Racing*) includes all the world-class courses of the original, including Whistler in British Columbia, Oregon's Mount Bachelor, Colorado's Vail and Aspen, France's Val d'Isere, and Germany's Garmisch. Also included are all the events of the original: the slalom, the giant slalom, the Super G, the downhill, and the grueling "all-around." The Irrepressible Picabo Street is back as your coach and mentor.

Dynamix, developers of *Skiing '99*, have added some new twists in the course, however. In addition to improvements to the game physics, there are two new mountains where skiers can "get creative" on 4,000+ acres of open ski terrain, complete with jumps, boulders, and trees. Unlike the first game, in this new version you can ski through stands of trees and fields of boulders while searching for that big air jump. Plus you can impress your friends by recording your freestyle adventures, adding music, and playing them back on the game's "VCR" feature. It's all the exhilaration of downhill skiing without the frostbite or fear of falling! Look for *Skiing '99* when the snow builds on the slopes.



WON-Way Ticket

WHAT DO SPORTS ENTHUSIASTS, tactical robot commanders, fishing addicts, and card players have in common? **WON** (www.won.net)! Within these virtual stadiums, placid lakes, alien battlefields, and luxury casinos, a growing number of online gamers have been meeting to test their skills and strategies.

WON-sponsored tournaments are a common occurrence, pitting the hottest card sharks, HERC jockeys, football managers, and virtual golfers against each other for cool prizes and instant fame. Did you know that over 20 fishing associations have formed on WON? In September, these intrepid lunger-hunters will battle it out (metaphorically speaking) for the ultimate bass-fishing crown.

No matter what your game, you'll find plenty of multiplayer action on WON. Fans of *Hoyle's* card games, for example, have their own subculture on WON. Every Friday is tournament night, when hundreds of players crowd into the Spades Room to draw, discard, play, and generally shoot the breeze. Volunteer hosts are on hand to teach new players the tricks



of the game and offer helpful advice. In fact, the *Hoyle* rooms are some of the busiest and most popular on WON!

And remember: playing on WON is absolutely FREE. As long as you've been paying your Internet bill and have a registered copy of one of

WON's supported games,



you can log in at any hour of the day or night and play until you drop, for no extra cash. The only "green" involved are the golf courses and the color of your opponents when you reel in that 60-pound channel cat and they pull up an 8-ounce crappie.

Another of WON's great features is its friendly, helpful environment. Head moderator Paul Quinn wrangles an intrepid group of more than 60 volunteer helpers who patrol the virtual landscape and answer game-related questions. They also help to maintain a safe

and supportive setting where users can visit without fear of harassment by rude or unsavory characters.



Trophy Hunting

THE ANNUAL E3 EXPO HAS COME and gone, and what does Sierra On-Line have to show for it? A big bag of industry awards! (Plus a few victory hangovers, but that's another story.) Five separate gaming

publications gave up a week's worth of sleep to browse every single booth and test every single game at the show, and somehow still managed to type up the results in a coherent manner.

Check out Sierra's E3 Winners:

(www.sierra.com/Info/press/0099.html)

All Games

Gabriel Knight III: Best Adventure Game and Best Real-Time Strategy
Half-Life: Best First-Person Shooter and Best of Show
Grand Prix Legends: Best Racing Sim

Computer Gaming World

Homeworld: Best Game of the Show
Gabriel Knight III: Adventure Sizzler
Half-Life: Action Sizzler

PC Gamer's Hot 100 - Top Picks

Caesar III, *Gabriel Knight III*,
Half-Life, and *Homeworld*

Adrenaline Vault

Half-Life: Best Action Game
 and Best PC Game

Unified Gamers Online

Homeworld: Best Real-Time Strategy Game and Most Promising New Game
Half-Life: Best Action Game
 and Best PC Game
Babylon 5: Best Party Award



A Knight to Remember

SURPRISING AS IT MIGHT SEEM, there is apparently a whole new group of gamers out there who have never heard of Jane Jensen's supernatural detective, Gabriel Knight. What planet do you guys call home? Long before those posers Mulder and Scully were looking into strange events, Gabe was hot on the trail of voodoo murderers and neck-deep in were-wolves. Ancient curses and mysterious disappearances? They're all in a day's work for the last of the Schattenagers ("Shadow-Hunters").



And with a pile of awards ranging from the 1993 CES Best of Show to *COMPUTER GAMING WORLD*'s 1996 Game of the Year, this adventure series is something you really shouldn't miss.

Fortunately, Sierra is about to release the complete package of Knight enlightenment. In the upcoming *Gabriel Knight Collection*, you'll get the complete versions of *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers* and *Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within*, plus a novel by designer Jane Jensen and a sneak preview of her upcoming GK game, *Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned*. You'll find these tools of the Schattenager trade in your software store by the end of the summer! (www.sierra.com/gks/)

THE TOP FIVE

Sierra Games • Fall '98



1
NASCAR
RACING 2



2
PRO PILOT



3
YOU DON'T
KNOW JACK
HUGE



4
HELLFIRE



5
LORDS OF
MAGIC

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Games Supported

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Betrayal at Krondor
Betrayal in Antara
Birthright
Caesar II
Castle of Dr. Brain
Code Name: Iceman
The Colonel's Bequest
Conquest of Camelot
Conquest of the Longbow
Cyberstorm 2
Dagger of Amon Ra
EcoQuest I
Freddie Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist
Gabriel Knight
Gabriel Knight 2
Goblins I, II, III
Gold Rush
Half-Life
Inca
Incredible Machine
King's Quest I through VII
Leisure Suit Larry 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Lighthouse
Lords of Magic
Lords of the Realm I, II
Lost in Time
Manhunter: New York
Manhunter: San Francisco
Outpost
Phantasmagoria 1, 2
Pepper's Adventure in Time
Police Quest 1, 2, 3, 4
Police Quest: SWAT, SWAT 2
Quest for Glory I, II, III, IV
Rama
Rise of the Dragon
Secret of the Lost Rain Forest
Space Quest I, II, III, IV, V, VI
Shivers I, II
Urban Runner
Woodruff and the Schnibble

Return to the Realm

HOW DO YOU RELAX AFTER A hard day on the job? Invite friends over for dinner? Stop by the pub for a pint? Hack a few ogres to pieces? Did I mention that your job was crafting armor for battle-hungry warriors? For a



growing group of online gamers, an evening's relaxation means all of these things.

Welcome to *The Realm*, an online community of 20,000. Within its 5,000 rooms and locations, players can quest for gold and treasure, forge armor and weaponry, sell their skills as powerful enchanters, fight evil monsters, or visit friends in their favorite pub.

The Realm has proven to be so intriguing that many players are now logging in for a second year of play! Renewal rates stand at an impressive 42%. Many of *The Realm*'s regulars—from poets and advisors to jokers and thieves—have become recognizable features of the game's environment.

We chatted with several of these returning players. Each of them gave a different reason for renewing their membership, but a recurring theme was the lack of monthly fees (unlike other online RPGs, *The Realm* costs only \$49.95 for a year's worth of play). These veteran players help to give the game a sense of history and permanence. And to keep the forest clear of ogres. (www.realmserver.com)

Our Last, Best Hope for Victory

YOSEMITE ENTERTAINMENT IS blazing through their new *Babylon 5* space-combat simulator! The script is done, the basic flight physics are now in place, and lots of cool stuff is on the way. Netter Digital, the special-effects team behind the original television show, is providing the actual digital models and advice to Sierra's developers, helping them to create realistic, playable versions of *Babylon 5*'s familiar ships. A very sophisticated AI is in the works, which should create a very challenging environment for would-be universe-savers. The game's musical tracks are also under construction, featuring (of course) composer Christopher Franke, who wrote all of the *Babylon 5* television scores. And before the game hits store shelves early next year, several scenes will be filmed

with the actual television cast, on the original show sets. These sequences will reveal critical plot points for the game's complex, single-player version.

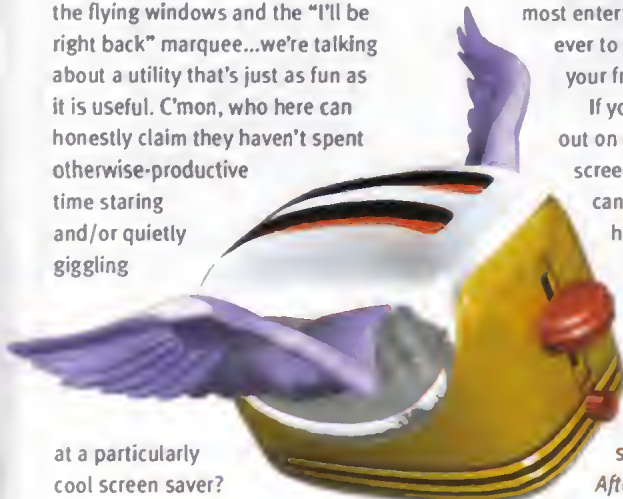
As for multiplayer? If you've ever wanted to fly a Starfury, you're apparently not alone. Sierra premiered the *Babylon 5* space-combat game to a select group of computer-industry reviewers at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (better known as the E3 Expo). After a world-premiere showing of the next *Babylon 5* movie, *Thirdspace*, followed by a discussion of story concepts and gameplay, the press was ushered into a room where an early version of the game was running on networked computers. Several members of the *Babylon 5* television cast were on hand to answer questions. Or, at least, that's how it was supposed to happen. Instead of mingling, however, actor Jerry Doyle (*Babylon 5*'s Michael Garibaldi) spent the evening glued to one of the Starfury stations...he couldn't stop playing. How could we ask for a better recommendation than that?

(www.bsgames.com/slm/)



Change of Screenery

BERKELEY SYSTEMS, THE GRAND pioneer of toaster aviation, is relaunching its highly popular collection of screen savers. Forget the flying windows and the "I'll be right back" marquee...we're talking about a utility that's just as fun as it is useful. C'mon, who here can honestly claim they haven't spent otherwise-productive time staring and/or quietly giggling



at a particularly cool screen saver? Those of you with your hands up have obviously never owned a copy of *After Dark*! And the only way to see what you're missing is to check out one of these releases:

After Dark 4.0 is Berkeley's top-selling set of whimsical, interesting, and sometimes eerie screen utilities. Hula Twins gyrate across your screen and compete with their whirling hoops. Psycho Deli brings shifting '60s colors to life in an all-new, totally legal format. The ghostly hand from *Foggy Messages* writes a note across your screen. And you'll just have to see



Art Critic to believe it. What's new in *AD4* will give you the creeps—literally: the complete *3D Ultra Pinball*

2: *Creep Night*, one of the most entertaining games ever to gobble up all your free time.

If you've missed out on all the great screen savers, you can catch up in a hurry (and get an even better deal!) with *After Dark Deluxe*.

With 20 screen savers from *After Dark 4.0*, plus *Creep Night*, plus

more than 60 of the best *After Dark* offerings from the past (*Flying Toasters*, *Fish*, *Mowin' Man*, and the rest), *After Dark Deluxe* is the ultimate collection of onscreen coolness. You could set a different display every single work day for four months and never see a duplicate! (This would be, however, an admission that you have way too much time on your hands.)

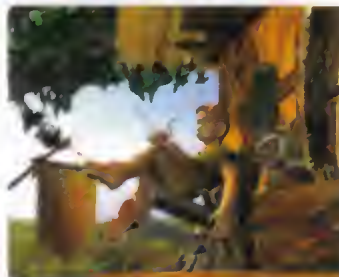
Oh! One more thing! For those of you who can't get enough of *After Dark*'s cool characters—*Flying Toasters*, *Bad Dog*, and their virtual

compadres—Berkeley will soon have a collection of classic and original games to challenge your mental fitness and arcade skill. Look for *After Dark Games* late this year. Maybe you, too, will find *Roof Rats* in your stocking.

(www.sierra.com/products/screen/)

License to Thrill

WHAT'S IN A NAME? WELL, adventure, familiarity, excitement, and ring-wraiths, for a start—as long as the name in question is *Lord of the Rings*. Sierra On-Line's Yosemite Entertainment division has just pulled a hobbit out of its hat by licensing the most popular fantasy world in history, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Middle earth*. Before the end of 1999, you'll be able to explore the fabled mines of Moria, battle Orc-ish hordes, or trade tales of adventure with thousands of other online players. The trick for Yosemite, of course, will be to keep the rich detail of Tolkien's novels while working to make *Middle-earth* accessible to gamers who may never have read the original works. But however tough the challenge, the developers are thrilled to have this chance, and believe they'll be rocking the online world in 1999. At least, designer Stephen Nichols has been muttering something about "one game to rule them all...." (www.tolkien-game.com)



THE TOP FIVE

Home Productivity Titles • Fall '98



1
COMPLETE
LANDDESIGNER



2
PRINT
ARTIST
PLATINUM



3
COMPLETE
HOME



4
COMPLETE
MASTERCOOK
SUITE



5
GENERATIONS
DELUXE

THE TOP TEN

Downloads
Summer, 1998



www.sierra.com/free

1. Johnny Castaway screen saver
2. Diving Adventure screen saver
3. Betrayal at Krondor
4. Red Baron 1
5. NASCAR Racing 2 demo
6. 3D MiniGolf demo
7. 3D Ultra Pinball 2: Creep Night demo
8. The Realm demo
9. 3D Ultra Pinball demo
10. Lords of Magic demo

Way Above Par

AH, MINIATURE GOLF.

the concrete

lighthouse, the big shoe, the spinning windmill....For some, this pas-time brings back fond memories of childhood, when the only thing you had to worry about was aiming for the hole and trying not to whack your dad on the backwing. For others, minigolf is a fun recollection of college days (when, let's be honest, aiming was less important than the finely crafted insults that accompanied your stroke). But no matter why you enjoy miniature golf, you'll find something to love in the new version of *3D Ultra Minigolf Deluxe* from Dynamix.

In addition to the original 18 holes of fun and challenge, this



version includes nine all-new putting scenarios. And we're not talking just a concrete dinosaur or a water-trapped bridge; this is minigolf like you only wish you could play in real life! There's Tornado Alley, where the pastoral landscape hides a vicious, ball-munching twister. Banshee Castle has ghosts, specters, and a spiral tower. Future City is a rooftop hole with sheer drops on either side.

Gorgeous 3D graphics and

extremely (sometimes painfully) realistic ball physics make you cheer with every victory and wince with every lost ball. (In this game, "lost" is a euphemism for "mangled, eaten, squashed flat, burned to a crisp, or sawn in half.") Animated obstacles and humorous traps make losing

almost as much fun as winning!

And for those who don't feel like parting with their college insults or just want to enjoy the camaraderie of mini-golfing with friends, *3D Ultra Minigolf Deluxe* offers head-to-head challenge for up to four players via modem, LAN, or WON. Fore!! ([www.sierra.com/titles/minigolf2/](http://www.sierra.com/titles/minigolf2/>(xb)))(xb)



Fantasy Sports the Easy Way



FANTASY-SPORTS ENTHUSIASTS

have two things in common: one, the desire to run their own league or team; and two, the wish that it was easy to do so! Scheduling, management, downloading (and re-keying) statistics, updating rosters, and uploading it all takes forever.

That's where *Fantasy Sports Pro* from Dynamix comes in. *FSP* will set you up as league commissioner and/or team owner and then do all the paper-shuffling for you. Automatically! Now you can concentrate on the action on the "field" rather than worry about typing in all the current stats. *FSP* is your portal to the four major sports: Terry Bradshaw Fantasy Football, Mike Richter Fantasy Hockey, Grant Hill Fantasy Basketball, and Cal Ripken Jr. Fantasy Baseball. The software offers you multiple drafting methods, automatically backs up all league data files, and lets you customize scoring as you see fit.

FSP's e-mail and web-publishing capabilities will keep you connected with team owners from coast to coast, and will probably put you back in touch with folks you haven't seen since your first fantasy league. Available now, just in time for the hockey and basketball seasons.

(www.slerrasports.com)

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Star Trek Starfleet Academy
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NEW Star Trek Borg
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Flight Sim., Pent90, 16mb
Air Warrior III
Flight Sim., Pent133, 24mb, J

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Deluxe Edition
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Hunting Experience
Sports, Pentium, 16mb

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Lords Of Magic
Strategy Game, Pent100, 16mb

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Home/Personal, P

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Flight Sim., Pent133, 16mb, J

Oregon Trail 3rd Edition
Children's Education, Pent90, 16mb

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The Lost Continent
Arcade Style, WC, 12mb

Math For The Real World
Children's Education, WC



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Starship Titanic**
Adventure, Pent 100, 16mb

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Guardians Of Destiny
Adventure, DOS, Pentium, 16mb

Backyard Baseball
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LAUNCH



SIEGE MENTALITY

By Chris Hudak

IN A FUTURISTIC WORLD WHERE THE RIGHT OF WAY goes to the biggest guns, the sneakiest ambushes, and the most crippling kneecaps, *Starsiege* rules. In this universe the only way you survive is by the seat of your pants and your wits—it all depends on how you customize and pilot your fleet of HERCS and tanks. Play by the rules and follow the scripted missions or create your own *Starsiege* universe. Record your victories and play them back later as you savor the thrill of domination. We sent Chris Hudak to Ground Zero, where he was strapped into a HERC and given an ego-busting demonstration. >>>



LOCALIZED HITS: The ability to shoot for specific parts of enemy units, blowing weapons out or simply knee-capping an opposing Cybrid, is one that can instantly and profoundly turn the tactical side of battle.

"If you've got an ounce of computer-gamer's bloodlust in your body, *Starsiege* may be the game that turns you on to these bipedal killing machines."

I recently flew to Eugene, Oregon, to visit Dynamix and have a look at the current state of their new game, *Starsiege*. I even got to play a number of multiplayer, free-for-all death matches with the designers, coders, and art guys, who let me win a round or two—and then methodically proceeded to tool up on me like I was a bored-over 400 in Advanced Placement Auto Shop.

I have, understandably, repressed most of the specific memories of that debacle, but I'll try to convey the flavor.

For those about to rock

You need to mentally put yourself in my shoes for this to work: You're sitting in the Dynamix offices, in front of an obscenely large and crisp monitor that makes the one you

have at home look like a grotty Etch-A-Sketch, engaged in a multiplayer battle with God-knows-who off in various other offices. All you know about them is that they hoot loudly enough to be heard down the hallway when they score an especially dramatic kill, usually on you, the visiting writer, who is definitely gonna wale on this thing in print if these half-crazed virtual Visigoths don't stop waling on you.

Onscreen, you find yourself in a first-person winter wonderland (if you ignore the shattered buildings and flaming hulks). A light snowfall fills the air. You're stopped dead, parked behind a fallen HERC of the same description, using the game's radical sniper's-eye, zoom-in feature, watching a cluster of distant enemy structures with considerable paranoia.

I should stop here and mention,

for the benefit of newbies, that you're trying to survive inside a Herculean battle tank, or HERC, in an apocalyptic world where the right of way goes to the biggest guns, the sneakiest ambushes, the most crippling knee-caps and head-tags, and the most brutal, snap-shot attacks from an aggressor who's already hauling ass back to his friends by the time you realize you've been ventilated like a colander. If you've got a liquid ounce of computer-gamer's bloodlust in your body, *Starsiege* may be the game that turns you on to these bipedal killing machines.

Five seconds ago, as your walking war machine pounded across the icy plain in search of the enemy, something, you're *still* not sure what, cranked off a shot at you, and it hurt; In fact, you lost one of your auxiliary weapons, and, truth be

told, you're a little pissed off about that. As soon as the offending aggressor opened up on you, so, it seemed, did about a hundred other guys, and for a few panicked seconds as you ran for cover, you were in the very eye of the Crossfire From Hell, hearing every last ping and boom and zap and thud as everything with a gun within 500 meters treated you to a plasma-gouting, heat-seeking, high-velocity-projectile bout of Smear the Queer.

And now suddenly it's quiet. Too quiet, as they say in the horror films, just before some Thing says Boo and the bloodletting begins in earnest.

The Heads-Up Display overlaying your first-person view is elegant, thorough, and customizable (read-outs for damage, weapon loadouts, radar, and the like can be toggled on, resized, and moved around to

your liking), and now it's telling you—elegantly, thoroughly, customizably—just how far up that famed creek you are, and where the paddle has apparently been firmly wedged. Most of your damage readout is presented in various and alarming shades of red. You just lost a weapon in a cowardly sneak attack from you don't know where, you're down to one long-range tracking weapon, and, in the distance, you hear gunfire.

Where there's smoke, there's HERCs

It's just a thin, distant trill of automatic cannon fire, *bracka-bracka-bracka-bracka*, but you zoom in on that distant cluster of buildings, and you can see that somebody out there is involved in a firefight. Tracers rip through the air between two buildings—the angle's not



WEAK IN THE KNEES: On open ground you'd be a lot more stable in a low-slung, low-profile, all-treads-on-the-ground tank.

THE FIRE & THE POWER

FLYERS

Advocate (Cybrid):

Height: 2.5m
Wingspan: 7m
Length: 8m
Mass: 20 tons
Shield: No
Speed: 500kph
Armor: Quicksilver
Main Armament: 2 MFACs,
2 Blast cannons
Special Equipment: Guardian ECM



Banshee (Imperial):

Height: 2.5m
Length: 5m
Wingspan: 8.5m
Mass: 35 tons
Shield: No
Speed: 400kph
Armor: Carbon Fiber
Main Armament: 2 Plasma
cannons, 2 Autocannons
Special Equipment:
Thermal diffuser



TANKS

Myrmidon (Imperial):

Height: 2.75m
Width: 5.5m
Length: 9m
Mass: 40 tons
Shield: No
Speed: 80kph
Armor: Ferro-composite
Main Armament: Plasma cannon
Special Equipment: LTADS



Bolo Tank (Cybrid):

Height: 3m
Width: 6.75m
Length: 7.25m
Mass: 26 tons
Shield: No
Speed: 140kph
Armor: Ceramic
Main Armament: Blink Gun



HERCS

Emancipator (Rebel):

Height: 5.2m
Width: 3.2m
Mass: 18 tons
Shield: 500 GW standard
Speed: 82kph
Armor: Ferro-composite
Main Armament:
Nanite cannon
Special Equipment:
Chameleon Cloak



Goad (Cybrid):

Height: 6m
Width: 5m
Mass: 44 tons
Shield: Yes
Speed: 145kph
Armor: Crystalluminum
Main Armament: 2 Autocannons
Special Equipment:
Chameleon cloak, Field
stabilizer, ECM





DRAW, PARTNER: Starsiege ships with 45 scripted missions and a mission editor—or you can fight your foes one on one.



"The **Heads-Up Display** is elegant, thorough, and customizable, and now it's telling you just how **far up** that famed creek you are."



STARSLIEGE

www.starsiege.com

Developer Dynamix

Format WIN95/98 CD
WIN NT

Rating Everyone

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Order # 83675

Phone 1.800.757.7707

optimal, you can't quite tell where the fire is being directed—and then, suddenly, there's the thing you've been waiting for: an explosion, followed by a hoot from one nearby office and an expletive from another. Another one bites the dust. Less for you to do.


Two very important words must be inserted here: Localized Hits. These words either put you into a state of unseemly excitement, or you haven't had much experience with this type of game and don't understand the tactical implications of the term—and if you have to ask, you may never understand. Either way, the ability to shoot for specific parts of the enemy units, blowing weapons out or simply knee-capping an opposing Cybrid—providing you have the time and cool-headed aim to do so under fire—is one that can instantly and profoundly turn the tactical tide of battle. And it looks really cool.

There's more gunfire, then a bright bolt of horizontal lightning, and something low and dog-legged comes charging from its hiding place, followed in rapid succession by more tracers, a blaze of plasma, the contrail of some rocket or other, and finally one, two, and then three attackers. You know how the running guy feels, but any tinge of sympathy is instantly supplanted by the cheery realization that *it isn't you*, and without a thought you burst from your own hiding place and join

the chase like the blood-crazed, remorseless, amoral weasel that you are.

The beleaguered defender running for his life zigs and zags, explosions going off all around him, taking the occasional retreating shot himself; he's getting way more than he gives, though, and at this rate it's only a matter of time before somebody takes him down. Seeing no reason why that somebody should-n't be you, you start converging with this wolf-pack hunt, closing with the poor doomed *schmuck* in the lead, your guns blazing inaccurately but impressively. He's being herded toward a long, sloping hillside. The hill will be his downfall, you instantly see. The hill offers no cover or escape crevices. In fact, the hill—the hill is shooting at you.

In the long, horrible ohnosecond before the point-blank railgun discharge sends you to Hell, you realize that the Running Guy had a cloaked ally sitting there the whole time, its image masked by mimicking the color and texture of the terrain behind it. You're maybe five meters away when a stream of particles moving at relativistic velocities takes your wounded HERC apart at the molecular level. The original three pursuers have long since peeled off and have found other things to shoot at.

From the end of the hallway at your back, you're pretty sure you hear laughter. 

PRETTY HATE MACHINE

Of course, you'll want to custom-paint your beloved machine before some random bastard blows it to smithereens, and you can do it here with style—a full skin editor allows players to create their own decoration schemes, adding different apparent textures, colors, and, of course, outfit designations.

Hard-core gamers really go overboard with this kind of thing, and in the few hours I spent at Dynamix I was shown every imaginative, specific, and just downright ridiculous coordination scheme, from blue-and-yellow Batman skins to NASCAR-style Budweiser paint jobs. (This last apparently arose from the idea of player-created custom "race" courses, around which the participants in a multiplayer game can hold their own little Grand Prix HERC affairs. Yes, you can use the game's built-in editor to create such a scenario, and if you do, I don't want to know about it.)

*For us, winning is an
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Stand tall with your Tribe as
you fight the oldest battle of all—
survival of the fittest.

The Few The Proud The Tribes



By Mark H. Walker



THE YEAR IS 3940, ELEVEN HUNDRED years after the epic battles depicted in *Starsiege*. The Imperial universe has expanded, warped, and splintered. Independent factions, rebelling against the Empire, have burst from known space. Eschewing the familiar, they establish their own civilization, a civilization based on Terra's most ancient code—survival of the fittest. They are proud, they are warriors, they are the Tribes. This game is their story.

Although *Starsiege: TRIBES* breaks from the treadbare gameplay of most current shooters, there is still plenty of sweaty-palmed, first-person, hunter/hunted action. However, unlike *Starsiege*, there are no HERCs in this game. Instead, players wear the boots of a futuristic, ground-pounding infantryman (or woman), trying desperately to cooperate with squadmates and defeat an enemy squad. But the fun doesn't stop there. In *TRIBES* you must think as well as you shoot.

"The ability to merge a first-person shooter with many of the elements of a challenging strategy game is one of the things I like most about *TRIBES*," says Tim Gift, Director of Technology at Dynamix, the developers of *TRIBES*. >>>

"Although Tribes breaks from the treadbare gameplay of most current shooters, there is still plenty of sweaty-palmed, first-person, hunter/hunted action."

TRIBES is all about strategy, all about interaction. Each team represents a tribe of up to 16 players. The team's leader directs the combatants' efforts from the Commander's Screen. If you've ever wondered what it's like to be the head honcho, the Commander's Screen is the place to find out. With a simple point 'n' click, you can direct warriors to guard your base, set up a reverse-slope position, attack the enemy, or travel to distant waypoints. If a real-life squad leader can order it, so can you (sorry, no KP duty). Of course, these are not unthinking polygons you are ordering about, but real people—people who want to kill, not be killed. So you'd better be good, or your tribe will drop you

like a live mortar shell and find someone else.

Voices out of the blue

But sometimes a mouse isn't enough. Although **TRIBES** doesn't support voice-compression technology (there's a limit to how much data you can push through a phone line, and the vivid graphics use some megabytes), the good folks at Dynamix have included a useful audio feature.

"We put five different voice sets in the game," explains Gift. "There are well over 100 voice commands—such as 'Is our base clear? Is our base under attack?'—that may be linked to keystrokes."

Even better, if gamers don't like the voices supplied by Dynamix,

they can record their own, distribute it to the rest of their tribe, and bask in the glory of their own vocal resonations.

TRIBES looks as good, if not better, than anything on the market. The landscapes—be they snow-covered plains, rolling green hills, or tanned desert dunes—are vast, some covering more than eight square kilometers. That's about 30 minutes running time from one corner to the next.

Once you've traversed that vast landscape to assault the enemy base, you'll transition—without bumps, stalls, or any kind of system hiccup—from rolling hills to dimly lit concrete-and-steel interiors.

There you'll find glowing communications panels, footlights, and all



TRY TO BURN THIS FLAG: In addition to playing capture the flag, you can stage a death match (your squad versus another), embark on one of 20 scripted missions, or create your own private war.

ARMED TO THE TEETH

These are the weapons that were available for inspection at press time. All of the weapons in **TRIBES** have "scope" capability—meaning no matter where you are or what you're in, the scope feature will let you zoom in on your hapless prey.

By the way, weapons and suits of armor aren't the only cool accessories. **TRIBES** is the only game in this genre to offer you battlefield vehicles to tool around in: Personal Flyers, Armored Personnel Carriers, and Transport Flyers. All vehicles will be player-pilotable.

Plasma Rifle:

Launches a molten slag of plasma.



Disc Launcher: Fires dinner-plate-looking explosive discs that can inflict "splash" damage on anything nearby.



Grenade Launcher:

Launches grenades with a 1.5-second fuse.



Chain Gun: Sprays a stream of bullets. Deadly at short range.



Laser Rifle:

Excellent weapon for long-range work.



FAMILY AFFAIR

Naturally, *TRIBES* consists of tribes. The history of these warrior castes makes up the game's backdrop. There are four major tribes: Children of Phoenix, Starwolf, Diamond Sword, and the Blood Eagles. (Gamers are welcome to found their own tribes—that is, if they think they can stand against the might of these original warriors.)

The Children of Phoenix

The oldest tribe, the Children of Phoenix, hopes to one day reunite all tribes and overcome the decadence of the Empire. The Children's greatest ally is the Starwolf; the Blood Eagles, their most hated enemy.



Blood Eagles

The most ruthless of all the tribes. They are also the caste that holds the rituals of the Imperial Knights most dear. The Blood Eagles are "almost" accepted by the Imperium, and are often seen wearing Imperium-issue armor.



Diamond Sword

The mystics of *TRIBES*. The Diamond Sword's Zen-like beliefs are similar to ancient Terran Buddhists. Although philosophers by nature, Diamond Sword warriors can be a devastating adversary when given time to prepare for battle.



Starwolf

This aggressive, territorial tribe traces its origins back to the original inhabitants of Earth's North American continent. A proud people, they have learned to endure and even thrive on planets other peoples deemed inhospitable.



sorts of variable lighting effects.

"The graphic engine's ability to effortlessly render exteriors and interiors is one of its most exciting features," says Gift. "Gamers will be able to move in and out of buildings without the slightest in game hesitation...we're really happy with it."

Play the packaged missions or serve up your own

Unlike other "shooters," *TRIBES* ships with a CD full of intriguing missions. Sure, you'll be able to have a death match (you or your squad against another team) and you'll be able to capture the flag, but there'll be other strategic fare to choose from: 20 scripted, objective-based multiplayer missions. Divided into four mini-campaigns, each of these missions will provide a unique set of objectives: base assaults, power-station destruction, objective capture and defense, etc.

(Although *TRIBES* was designed from the ground up as a multiplayer game, it does have a single-player element. Primarily envisioned as training missions, these battles—10 in all—will prepare gamers for the tougher war that awaits online.)

Still, gamers who tire of the scripted selection will be able to design their own slugfests. "The mission editor is another thing that differentiates *TRIBES* (from other games)," states Gift. "It is so simple to build missions with the drag-and-drop editor."

The scripted missions are designed to operate as one of two types: Pick-up or Resource (these names might change). Pick-up mode is the typical find-the-floating-weapon-and-pick-it-up game. Resource mode adds a layer of complexity that fits well with the game's strategic skin. Teams are given a fixed number of points and must spend them at inventory machines to equip their squad. You want that Missile Launcher? Sure, it'll take out a warrior from a kilometer away. But it costs the same as two Plasma Rifles. Can your squad afford it? Furthermore, if the bad guys (or gals) waste your



HAUNTED HOUSES: Once inside, you'll fight for your life in spooky concrete-and-steel interiors amid glowing banks of electronics.

inventory machine, you won't be able to buy any more weapons or ammunition.

The thinking gamer's Quake

TRIBES is a brand-new angle on first-person, squad-level combat. Think of it as a thinking gamer's *Quake* or perhaps a Quaking gamer's *Command and Conquer*. Either way, *TRIBES*' strategic overlay, Commander's Screen, "multiplayer first" design, and revolutionary indoor/outdoor graphics engine make this game something out of the ordinary.

TRIBES stands tall because of the environment, because of the strategy, because of the no-brainer mission editor, and because of the people—the people of the 40th century AD, the renegades, the survivors, the warriors—the tribes. Grab a Chain Gun, the Commander's calling. **n**



TRIBES

www.starsiege.com/tribes

Developer	Dynamix
Format	WIN95/98 CD WIN NT
Rating	Everyone
Price	\$39.95
Order #	83667
Phone	1.800.757.7707

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**753 BC**

A small town called Rome emerges on the world stage.

509 BC

After the Etruscans kill the last Roman king, the people form the Roman Republic.

338 BC

Rome defeats a league of jealous neighboring cities and becomes master of what is now central Italy.

290 BC

Rome defeats a rival northern Italian kingdom.

275 BC

Rome defeats the Greek cities of southern Italy and wins control of the entire peninsula.



The Glory that was Rome

By Mark H. Walker

Master the intricate art of city-building the old fashioned way: with togas, spears, and chariots

IT'S COMING. IT'S COMING TO TAKE YOUR LIFE. IT'S NOT THE latest horror from Dean R. Koontz or Stephen King; it's not a city-chomping mega-lizard; it's just a game. But when *Caesar III* hits the shelves this fall, strategy gamers had better stock up on frozen dinners and kiss their loved ones good-bye, because there will be no life but that of their mouse, their monitor, and the cities of ancient Rome.

Yes, *Caesar III* is a game filled with all the detail needed to build a city. But like its predecessors, *Caesar III* is more than an ancient *SimCity*. Your goal, at least in the career game, is to succeed the Emperor himself.

264 BC

Rome begins a fight to the death with its greatest adversary, the North African kingdom of Carthage, in the First Punic War.

241 BC

Rome occupies Sicily, ending round 1.

218 BC

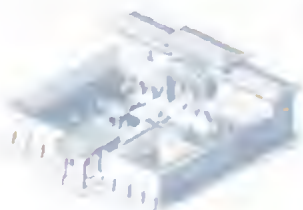
In the Second Punic War, Hannibal invades Italy with his troops and elephants.

216 BC

Hannibal, Rome's gravest threat until the coming of the barbarians, crushes the Romans at Cannae (southeastern Italy).

202 BC

Hannibal is defeated by Scipio Africanus the Elder at Zama (present-day Tunisia). Rome wins Spain. End round 2.





BIG WHEELS

KEEP ON TURNIN'

Connectivity? Did I mention the wheels-within-wheels thing? Continuing the 20th-century metaphor, did I also mention that inside the wheels-within-wheels are ball bearings, which in turn consist of a bunch of BBs, which are made up of a ton of orbiting atoms, which...well, you get the picture. Let's take a look at a day in the life of a would-be computer Emperor and see how the gears of *Caesar III* mesh.

It all starts innocently enough. The game boots, and the real nice-looking terrain (I like to save overused words like "jaw-popping" for solar-system discoveries and the second coming of deities) pops onto your screen. You click the Housing icon and lay down a row of Property for Sale signs. In trundle the settlers and up go their tents. Now, you need to raise the property value in order to upgrade the tents, so you plop down a fountain across the road. Unfortunately, the fountain has no water, so it is basically a graffiti-

collection device. No problem, just building a reservoir next to the river should handle that. Ah, but it doesn't—the reservoir is too far from the fountain. OK, a set of aqueducts connecting to a new reservoir next to the fountain will bring water to the masses. What—still no water?

Right. You need to allocate some plebes to man the water services. You call up the Labor Allocation screen and put Water Services at the top of the priority list. That done, you return to the screen to witness your creation unfold. Sure enough, the reservoir fills with water, the aqueduct conducts the water, and the fountain sprays water. Housing is on its way up!

An ounce of prevention...

But now a fire breaks out. Seems in all the excitement you forgot to build a praefecture. No praefecture means no praefects, and no praefects means no fire protec-

tion. Quickly you erect the praefecture and pop the Labor Allocation screen, giving Fire Prevention top priority. Slowly the praefecture gathers employees; the praefects head out and extinguish the fire.

But now the fountain won't work. There aren't enough citizens to maintain adequate fire protection and run the water services. You need more Romans. Well, the upgraded housing should soon provide that. Unfortunately, placing the praefecture so close to houses limits their ability to grow. Hence no new Romans appear. The ancient world isn't as simple as we moderns like to think!

And so it goes. Running a city is a balancing act. But fear not, for the above is a worst-case scenario. Most gamers will be able to develop and maintain a living, breathing, workable city within a couple of hours. (Actually winning—especially in career mode—may take a little longer....)

Julius Caesar had to start somewhere

The succession begins in the city. The richly detailed and animated landscape of *Caesar III* makes its predecessor—which was definitely no graphical slouch—look, well...dated. The entire municipality is animated. Praefects (the firemen and all-around watchmen of two millennia ago) patrol the city streets, fountains spray light blue water, and gladiators slash and parry in the coliseum.

But the animations are more than self-serving eye candy. A district is not safe unless a praefect walks through it; if a theater is placed where there are no roads or houses, no one will come to see a play; if crops don't sprout on the farms... wait a minute! Farms? In the city?

That's right, *Caesar III* dispenses with the multiple screens of *Caesars I* and *II*. In this game you grow, store, sell, and fight for your wheat on the same screen. It's not only simpler, but enhances the feeling of interconnectivity.

Each event and every building affects the structures that surround it and in turn the city that surrounds them. Remember theaters? If *Caesar II* popped the "Housing restricted due to limited access to entertainment facilities" window, you could plant a theater and watch your housing grow. Life isn't that simple anymore. Actors must first train at the actors' colony before staging *OEDIPUS REX* reruns. Once trained, they need access to the theater, which needs access to housing. You must allocate enough people to make all this work, in addition to praefects to watch over


149 BC

Carthage has had enough, but Rome hasn't. The Third Punic War erupts.

146 BC

Rome captures Carthage, burns it and sows salt in the earth. End round 3 (and game).

60 BC

The Roman Republic ends when Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus form a ruling triumvirate.

49 BC

Caesar and his legions cross the Rubicon, a river dividing his province in Gaul with Italy proper, thereby igniting a civil war.

48 BC

Caesar defeats Pompey and dates Cleopatra.



the city, engineers to maintain it, and soldiers to defend it.

And then there's the politics. "The Emperor will assign specific tasks you must accomplish in addition to maintaining your city," game designer David Lester explains. "We even added a 'favor' rating to reflect your status with the Emperor."

On the flip side, Lester and his crew have done a lot to "simplify" what might have become a complex, textbook-like game. You no longer need to assign each plebe a job; instead, you merely set the community priorities. For example, you might make fire prevention job one, and assign engineering

a somewhat lower priority. Accordingly, your praefectures (which house the praefects) will staff up before your engineer's post. The likelihood of a fire ram-paging through the city will drop (though with fewer engineers, there's more chance of a bridge falling down or a wall falling over—all part of the municipal balancing act).

All roads lead to Rome

At first glance, some of the game's mechanics seem remarkably similar to *Caesar II*. After all, once the actors are on stage, the theater has the same positive impact on nearby housing as the theaters of the



ANCIENT DOESN'T MEAN PRIMITIVE: A Roman city of 2,000 years ago is just as finely balanced as a city today. Without good roads, plentiful water, protection against fire and invasion, industries to provide jobs, and places to work, live, and congregate, your Romans will riot or move elsewhere. Who wouldn't?

47 BC

In Asia Minor, a victorious Caesar declares, "Veni, vidi, vici" ("I came, I saw, I conquered").

44 BC

"Et tu, Brute?" ("You too, Brutus?") The assassin's blade catches up with Caesar. A second civil war begins.

31 BC

Octavian (Caesar's nephew) defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra in the naval battle of Actium (off the western coast of Greece).

27 BC

Octavian becomes the first emperor of Rome and is renamed Augustus. August is named in his honor.

14-37

The reign of Tiberius. Jesus is crucified.



"This game is going to take your life. And you're not going to complain!"

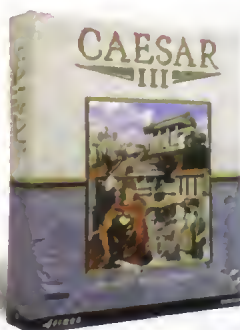
previous game. Have the underpinnings changed? Yes indeed.

"A structure's area of influence in *Caesar II* was tile-based," says Eric Ouellette, *Caesar III*'s producer. "Accordingly, gamers tended to build a perfect 'block,' then copy it.

"The influence of structures is still critical; however, that influence is now extended via the road network. Each time a praefect passes a building, he lowers the chance that it will catch fire. Now, that praefect will only cover so much territory. He may walk around the block, providing protection to a square of buildings, or he might walk the length of a 50-tile avenue. Hence gamers have more options when they lay out their cities."

But the influence and Interaction goes far beyond the construction of buildings. The terrain itself offers a myriad of options. Farms may prosper in the fertile terrain of southern Europe, but flounder in the deserts of northern Africa. Mines might thrive in the harsh desert environs, but bring in little or nothing in more temperate climates.

Those choices are the gamer's to make. And *Caesar III* is all about choices, all about giving the gamers what they want. In the words of David Lester, "If anyone liked *Caesar II*, they'll love *Caesar III*. If they even wanted to like *Caesar II* but found it a little dry or difficult, they'll love *Caesar III*." **Q**



CAESAR III

www.sierrastudios.com

Developer	Impressions
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Pending
Price	\$49.95
Order #	70558
Phone	1.800.757.7707

GIVING SPARTACUS A RUN FOR HIS MONEY

Much of *Caesar III* will be familiar to *Caesar* fans; the combat will not. While we're not talking about the difference between apples and oranges—a legion is still a legion—warfare in this period, as seen on your computer screen, will be handled differently.

For openers, there is no "combat" screen. To contort an old REM lyric, you fight from the place that you work. The Empire map should give you plenty of notice before an attacker reaches your province; however, you'll find that defending your city is an intricate enterprise.

"There are basically three levels of defense," explains Eric Ouellette. "Level one is walls and towers. You can build walls as thick as you like. The towers will send out guard patrols, which will automatically unleash javelins or fire ballista-like arrows at enemy units.

"The second level is your army. Gamers may build up to 10 forts, and each fort holds 16 troops rallied under one standard. You may set these troop formations and order the standards anywhere on the map. They will engage enemy formations they encounter, in real time, and on your city streets if necessary.

"Finally, if given the chance, your praefects and even gladiators will try to stop the attackers. But they are nowhere near as powerful as your regular army."

You may order each fort to train certain types of troops—heavy or light infantry, for example. Invaders will also field a variety of warriors, including cavalry (camel- and elephant-mounted troops). Man against elephant on the steps of the Senate! It's the stuff of movies.



313

Constantine I, last of the good emperors, issues an edict of tolerance for all religions.



395

The death of Theodosius I, the last emperor of a unified Roman Empire. Rome splits into Western and Eastern halves, with capitals in Rome and Constantinople.

410

The Visigoths sack Rome.



476

The German chieftain Odoacer overthrows the last emperor of the Western empire. Rome falls.



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Multiplayer Mayhem

Half-Life, with its simple interface and customizability, may just be the salvation of multiplayer gaming

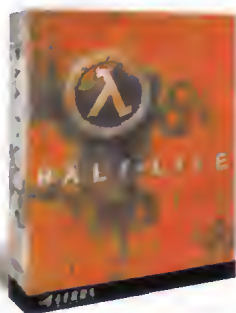
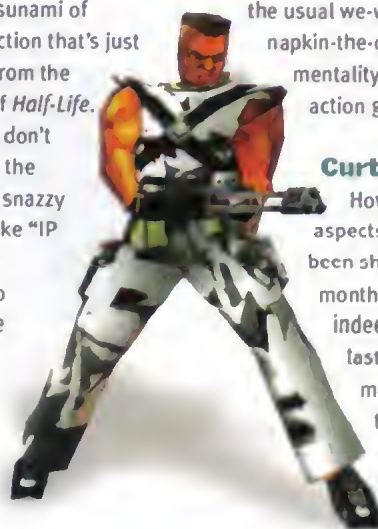
By Geoffrey Keighley

Just as there are two sides to every story, there are two important sides to *Half-Life*, Sierra Studios' first-person action romp. Yes, a key chunk of the game involves the single-player action, including razor-sharp character intelligence, shiny graphics, and a plot that, refreshingly, is more intricate than the usual we-wrote-it-up-on-a-napkin-the-day-before-it-shipped mentality adopted by most action game designers.

Curtain going up!

However, the multiplayer aspects of *Half-Life* have been shrouded in secrecy for months. Perhaps Valve has indeed saved the best for last. "We've been a lot more talkative about the things in the single-player *Half-Life* experience than about what we've

doused in a tsunami of multiplayer action that's just a click away from the main action of *Half-Life*. For once, you don't need to know the definitions of snazzy cyber terms like "IP address" and "ping time" to jump onto the Internet and play real games with or against your friends.



HALF-LIFE

www.sierrastudios.com

Developer	Valve
Format	WIN95/CD
Rating	Pending
Price	\$54.95
Order #	70365
Phone	1.800.757.7707

"The interactive environment, with its moving trains, elevators, and conveyor belts, adds a new layer of strategy to multiplayer games."

done with the multiplayer experience up until this point," says Valve founder Gabe Newell. That's all about to change. Thanks to concepts such as finding your friends online, one-click Internet play, and the ability to customize your appearance, multiplayer in *Half-Life* is anything but an afterthought.

"In general, we think a lot more people would be playing online if it was more fun and less frustrating than what people have traditionally had to put up with," explains Newell. With that thought in mind, Valve set out to develop an interface that would make logging onto an online game of *Half-Life* as simple as launching the game in the first place—one click.



In addition, Valve has designed the game so that you can actually seek out your friends online in what amounts to a virtual White Pages.

"You type in someone's name," says Newell, "and the game will check with a computer that knows where people are and match you up." Players will then be able to venture onto specific multiplayer maps created for up to 32 simultaneous players. There are two modes of play, the head-to-head death-match style and the cooperative mode, where you team up with others and explore the game together.

Putting high tech to good use

Many of the technological breakthroughs achieved for the game lend themselves well to multiplayer action. The skeletal animation system allows you to see the weapon another player is carrying, and the ability to add bullet holes and markings to the walls is a great way to create virtual graffiti and stake out your own territory.

Furthermore, the interactive environment, with its moving trains, elevators, and conveyor belts, adds a new layer of strategy to multiplayer games. Imagine pressing the Down button on the elevator and waiting for it to arrive: It could prove quite surprising if your friend is on the other side of the door with a machine gun loaded and ready to unleash its lead as soon as the bell rings and the steel doors crank open. Run for cover!

SPIES, MEDICS, AND ENGINEERS TEAM UP

"Team Fortress is for the person who already knows they like multiplayer, but is looking for a richer and more varied multiplayer experience than they've been getting," says Gabe Newell, an avid player of the original *Team Fortress*, which was an extremely popular add-on for *Quake*. Now the developers of *Team Fortress* have joined Valve Software to create the sequel to their game, a *Team Fortress* built especially for *Half-Life* (to be released this fall).

What exactly is *Team Fortress*? It's an online team game that champions strategy, coordination, and balance as well as quick-pulsed reaction to enemy attacks. Players join a team and select a specific character class—whether it's a medic who can heal people, an engineer who can build things, or a spy who can disguise himself. Operating out of a home base, your team works together and must employ the strengths of each class in order to achieve victory.

"Some maps are designed for fighting, others for capture-the-flag scenarios, and some involve more strategy and territory/resource control," explains Newell, who actually brought the Australian developers of *Team Fortress* to Valve's Seattle-area office so they could create this breakthrough game. The result is, as Newell says, "a much more social and varied gaming experience than traditional multiplayer action games."

By combining strategy with the need for a coordinated team effort, *Team Fortress* will no doubt be the answer for gamers who are looking for even more variety in the *Half-Life* multiplayer experience.



I GAVE AT THE OFFICE: Unarmed, panicky humans aren't going to do well against xenomorphic scum with built-in weaponry. If they're lucky they'll die quickly and not end up as alien training wheels.



BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR: "I want a world that's as rich and interactive as possible," Gabe Newell says. Run!



If you're really looking to make your presence known online, take your mug shot (preferably not a *real* mug shot) and scan it into your computer. *Half-Life* can then take that image and map it to the face of your

character. To further increase the customizability of the game, you can design a unique logo for your player or team and use that as a decal that can be spray-painted throughout the level.

So what's this going to cost you? It's free through WON.net. Players will get 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-

a-week multiplayer action in *Half-Life* absolutely free of charge. Combine that with the one-click-and-you're-there multiplayer mode for *Half-Life*, and playing the game online will suddenly seem like a reasonable proposition to almost every player who has an Internet connection.

"I believe that people want to play together cooperatively in a very rich world, instead of just running around shooting at each other in empty boxes."

GABE NEWELL
CO-FOUNDER, VALVE

Once upon a really dreadful time...

Half-Life's designer and writer is Marc Laidlaw, a man who knows his way around a plot. Laidlaw is the author of the intricately constructed novels *Dad's Nuke*, *The Orchid Eater*, and *The 37th Mandala*. He put his considerable talents in the fields of science fiction and horror to work in *Half-Life*—in fact, he worked them overtime to create a story that would keep even the hardest of hard-core gamers enthralled.

The story begins underground, as close to Hell as one can get, in the decommissioned missile base known as the Black Mesa Research Labs. Everything is going well on the government's latest top-secret project, though you (the player) can only assume that all is well—you're a very small cog in this operation. Every morning you ride the subway to work from the employee dorms,

run stress tests on whatever gizmo has been delivered to your test bench, eat lunch, run more tests, and take the train back to the dorm.

But one morning your stress tests don't go as planned. Maybe they delivered the wrong device; maybe it was sabotage; maybe you screwed up. None of that matters now. With a flash and a bang, worlds collide, and, in the words of Laidlaw, "reality is getting bent all out of shape." You've opened a door into an alien world, and the aliens are coming to dinner. What's on the menu? You!

The corridors are in chaos. (Monsters and corpses and monsters munching on corpses and monsters using corpses as extra arms and legs.) "Madness," decrees Laidlaw, "is the order of the day." You have to get

out of there, but the usual escape routes are blocked by aliens, by debris from the explosion you set off, and by government employees (soldiers, special forces, and assassins) who are determined to ethnically cleanse the Black Mesa labs. And that may include you. Good luck, keep your wits about you, and here's hoping you survive the ride.

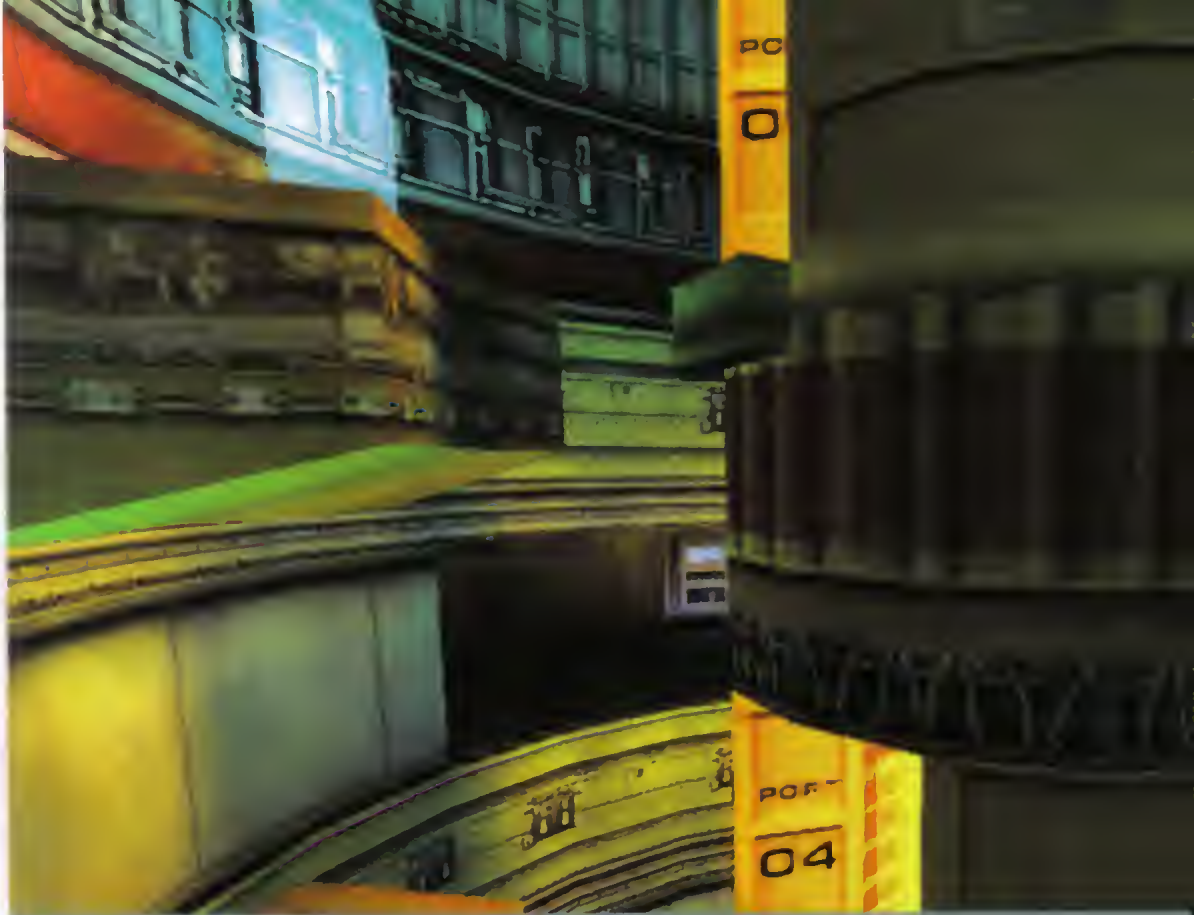


A plural game focus

Although *Half-Life* has already received many plaudits for its revolutionary take on single-player gaming, the multiplayer aspect seems destined for similar accolades and the eventual building of an entire online community of *Half-Life* gurus. Where does Newell see multiplayer going from here on out? "I want a world that is as rich and interactive as possible with everything and more that people are putting into single-player games," he says. "I want to be able to go into that world with my friends, and maybe encounter some other tribes or squads or clans with competitive goals along the way.

"There is this dichotomy people are trying to create between what people want to do in a single-player game versus a multiplayer game that is really only sustainable for death-match-style multiplayer games," Newell says. "I believe that a much larger group of people want to play together cooperatively in a very rich world, instead of just running around shooting at each other in empty boxes. That seems to be the more important challenge going forward."

Taking Newell's words as a portent of what's to come, there's no doubt that the ever-growing trend of multiplayer gaming has huge potential down the road. With *Half-Life*'s simple multiplayer interface, you'll be wandering the halls of the Black Mesa Research Labs in no time, running into friends and foes. In many ways, *Half-Life* isn't "half" of anything—it's a full-blown suite of the best single-player and multiplayer gaming, injected with unique gameplay, revolutionary multiplayer features, and, best of all, an interface that won't absorb the brain power you'd rather devote to the game itself. 



Sculpt Your Own World... or Play in Someone Else's

In late 1996, gamers got their hands on the first "editing" program for first-person action games—*Worldcraft*. Using this level editor, these pioneers could create their own 3D levels and exchange them online with their friends. Soon the Web was abuzz with virtual worlds just waiting to be downloaded. Truth be told, many hardcore fans were so skilled at designing levels that they ended up being hired by game companies (such as Valve) to work on their forthcoming releases (such as *Half-Life*).

Valve knew that a level editor would need to be an integral part of the *Half-Life* experience, for players with ambitions of one day designing their own 3D game and for players who just want to build something fun to fool around in. What Gabe Newell & Co. wanted was an editor of such power that Valve's own designers could use it in their work on *Half-Life*. To that end, in early 1997 Valve purchased *Worldcraft* and retooled it for *Half-Life*. The result: *Worldcraft 2.0*, which will ship in the *Half-Life* box later this year.

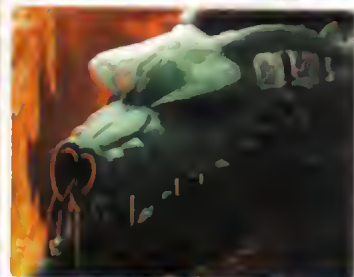
The right tool for the right job

Once you're done neutralizing the alien threat in *Half-Life*'s immense single-player campaign, *Worldcraft 2.0* will give you everything you need to construct beautiful, complex new worlds: textures, faces, logos, decals, models, animations, scripted sequences, beam effects, sprites—the works.

Note to newbies: Don't be intimidated by talk of textures and sprites. The pros use *Worldcraft*, but even the pros like a tool that's easy to use! The online documentation will help novice users get up to speed in no time.

Worldcraft will help keep *Half-Life*'s legacy alive long after the game ships. Who knows how many game designers of tomorrow will get their start by building their own world today? Even if you aren't interested in building your own levels, you can be sure that the Web will be flooded with user-created maps that you can download and try thanks to *Worldcraft 2.0* and *Half-Life*.

"Valve knew that a level editor would need to be an integral part of the *Half-Life* experience..."



The Quest Continues

In Quest for Glory V, fight with your bare hands, your weapons, or your wits—but remember, every fight will be different

By Cindy Vanous



QUEST FOR GLORY V

www.sierra.com/qg5

Developer	Yosemite Entertainment
Format	WIN95/MAC CD
Rating	Teen
Price	\$49.95
Order #	70325
Phone	1.800.757.7707

THE BIGGEST BUZZWORD IN computer gaming today is "replayability." Every game claims to have it, whether it's achieved through mission editors, random levels, death-match play, or downloadable add-ons. But one upcoming game offers replayability in an unusual format—by tailoring the plot to meet the individual gamer's style and method of play.

This game is *Dragon Fire*, the latest installment in Sierra's long-running *Quest for Glory* series. Its

rare combination of action, adventure, and role-playing elements makes for an extremely versatile, highly replayable game.

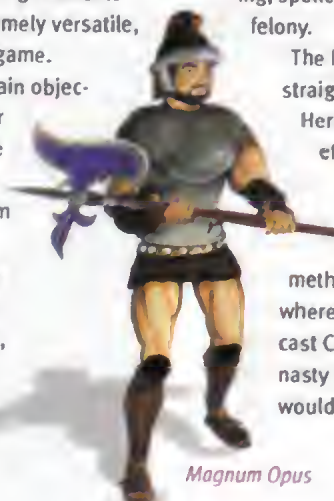
Dragon Fire's main objective is the same for all players: win the seven Rites of Rulership and claim the crown of Silmaria. But there is more than one way to skin a katta, and the methods by which

you can achieve your goal will ultimately depend on which character you choose to play and what battle tactics you prefer.

The single-player Quest

In the single-player version of the game, you control the quintessential Hero, veteran of many past adventures. He's a member of one of three professions—sword-fighting, spellcraft, or good-natured felony.

The Fighter is the most straightforward of these Heroes. He can fight effectively with practically any weapon, and nearly as well without one. His methods are simple—where the Wizard might cast *Calm* to subdue a nasty foe, the Fighter would kill it. Where the



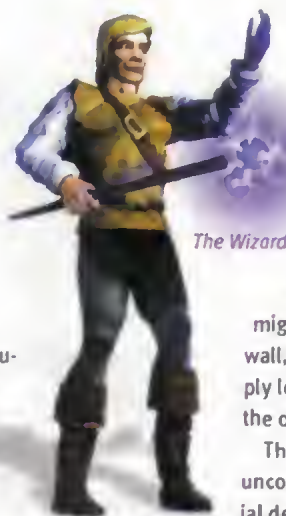
Magnum Opus

"Not only are the **monsters** new and **nasty**, but the artificial intelligence that controls them is smarter, wilier, and **much more realistic.**"

Thief could use acrobatic moves to avoid the blow of an enemy, the Fighter would simply block with his shield and...well, kill it. Fighters aren't particularly subtle.

In addition to pursuing the game's main goal, the Fighter can also enter the Challenge of Champions.

The Wizard puts more emphasis on strength of will than he does on muscle. Considering his abundance of the former and lack of the latter, this is probably a good thing. Where the Fighter charges an



The Wizard

enemy with drawn sword and bloodthirsty glee, the Wizard is more inclined to stand back and cast damaging spells. Where the Thief might climb a troublesome wall, the Wizard would simply levitate over and land on the other side.

The Thief, who is serenely unconcerned with such trivial details as honor, plies his

trade in the deepest shadows of Silmaria. Where a Fighter might win money by dispatching a wealthy monster, the Thief can gain a similar amount through safe-cracking. Where a Wizard might cast a Hilde spell to evade the gaze of a dangerous foe, the Thief could sneak up from behind and knock it unconscious with his blackjack.

Once he has joined the local Guild, a Thief can also participate in the ongoing contest to become Chief Thief of Silmaria.

The multiplayer Quest

In the multiplayer version of *Dragon Fire*, you may also choose to play Elsa or Magnum. These are specialized characters that rival the Hero in skill and experience. Elsa von Spielberg is the most versatile character; she has a convenient mix of Fighter and Thief skills and is also the only character who can use a bow. Elsa knows the Hero from long ago, when he rescued her from the curse of an ogress. However, don't expect much in the way of gratitude from her; she'll use every tactic at her command to beat the Hero at all seven rites and win the throne of Silmaria. She's tough, she's smart, she's stunningly pretty, and she's determined to become king.

Magnum Opus, the other non-Hero character, is a gladiator of many obvious charms. Think of him as a beefed-up Fighter with certain intellectual limitations, and you'll have an excellent notion of his skills. He's brawny, battle-trained, healthy as an ox and just as brainy. In a fair fight, he could outlast a

WHO'S WHO IN SILMARIA

Toro

Elsa's closest friend and confidante. He has the brawn of a warrior, but the brain of a farm animal.



Erasmus and Fenris

A scatterbrained wizard and his pet rat. These two are more powerful than they seem.



Dr. Pretorius

A kind-hearted scientist with an unfortunate secret.



Wolfie

Works like a dog selling pottery, but dreams of becoming an artist.



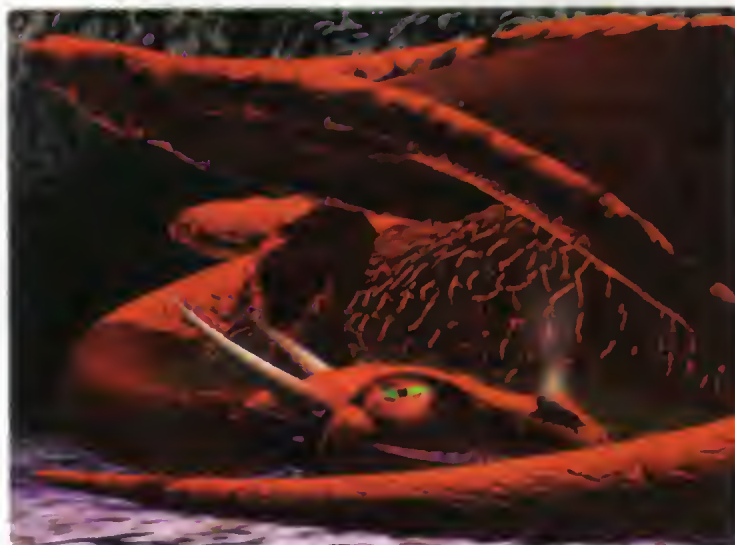
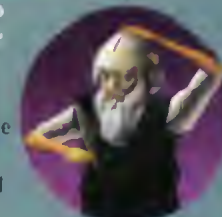
Shakra

A male Liontaur trying to make a living in his culture's oldest female profession—wizardry.



The Famous Adventurer

You graduated from his Correspondence School, but never expected to meet him!



LAST RESORT: Silmaria might seem an island paradise, but ancient evil and human greed quickly spoil the vacation.

"Lori Cole defines a **monster** as 'that which attacks without asking questions,' and she's provided some of the **most memorable monsters** in the genre."

Fighter of similar experience, and deal a bit more damage in the process. He can skewer a foe with thrown spears, and take a lot of damage as well as give it out. Just don't expect him to chew gum while he's doing it.

Everybody wants to rule the world

Whichever of these characters you pick, you'd better expect to fight a number of bad guys in your quest to rule the kingdom! Designer Lori Cole defines a monster as "that which attacks without asking questions," and in her career she's provided some of the most memorable monsters in the genre. Exotic enemies from past QFG games included the poisonous flying cobra, the desert-dwelling jackalmen, and the ghoulish necrotaur. In *Dragon Fire*, not only are

the monsters new and nasty, but the artificial intelligence that controls them is smarter, wilier, and much more realistic.

"It's that level of realism we have added to the game," she explains, "the ability to move and maneuver, the freedom

to use potions, to cast spells in combat in the actual room, that takes this beyond what we have ever been able to do before. You, as the player, will have a full range of control over

Elsa von Spielberg



HIDDEN PERIL: Silmaria's shadowy recesses conceal the lairs of hungry beasts and wily thieves.

offensive and defensive moves, and you can take advantage of a wide range of combative styles. You can fight with bare hands, fight with a variety of weapons, fight with spells, and even fight underwater. You will be outnum-

bered in many places. The trick is to play smarter, and to out-think your foes."

No matter which character you choose, you'll need every trick in the book to finish this ultimate *Quest for Glory!* **n**

Hear the Adventure

As a member of the *Dragon Fire* development team, Chance Thomas, an Emmy Award-winning composer, set out to create not only an excellent game soundtrack, but one that would also be at home in a major motion picture. To this end, he composed more than 200 original pieces of music, each for a certain situation or area in *Dragon Fire* and each with its own flair. Some, like the "Dance of Mystery and Intrigue," have the exotic overtones of Mediterranean culture; some sound brassy and exciting, as in the "Rite of Valor"; and others, like "Frolic in Gnome Ann's Inn," are downright whimsical.

Several major themes wind their way through these pieces, tying them together and bringing a sense of continuity to the whole. (It was a happy surprise when the original *Quest for Glory* theme reappeared!) The entire work is accented by a symphonic orchestra, talented vocalists, and expert studio musicians, giving it a feeling of "reality" that would be difficult to achieve with synthesized instruments alone.

Sierra has now released the soundtrack as a stand-alone music CD. Eighteen tracks provide a wide-ranging sample of *Dragon Fire*'s themes, from the elusive and haunting "Rite of Destiny" to the pulse-pounding "Day in the Arena."

The soundtrack CD also includes comprehensive liner notes from Lori Cole and a special

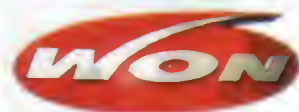


"sneak peek" demo of *Dragon Fire*. Although the soundtrack won't be available in stores until the release of *Dragon Fire*, it can be purchased now from Sierra's website www.sierra.com/qq5 or on the direct-order line (800)-757-7707.

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The Truth Will Set You Free

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity is as much a personal journey as it is a battle against evil

By Geoffrey Keighley

any work of fiction, the characters inhabiting *Mask of Eternity*—the latest adventure in the *King's Quest* universe—embody emotions and virtues we can all relate to.

The *King's Quest* universe is so rich that the series has thrived through seven sequels—games that have continually reinvented what gaming is all about. Just as many of our personal myths give us a sense of direction and meaning, the *King's Quest* series is perhaps gaming's universal myth. It's a myth that constantly redefines what an interactive story should be about, including exploration, personal conviction, and entertainment.

Mask of Eternity is the eighth and latest chapter in the series, and perhaps the biggest evolutionary step in terms of technology and design.

PHILOSOPHER SAM KEEN once said, "A living myth, like an iceberg, is only 10 percent visible; 90 percent lies beneath the surface of consciousness of those who live by it." The stories that we live by are the foundation of our beliefs; they embody the virtues that we hold as universal truths. But when you think about it, as Keen alluded to, we seldom question the core myths that give each and every one of us a sense of meaning and direction. They're second nature to us.

Roberta Williams' *King's Quest* series from Sierra Studios has

always intertwined important myths about truth, trust, and love and other matters with an array of involving characters. By allowing us to explore these myths and their meanings through her characters and their worlds, Williams has captured the imagination of gamers around the world. Williams is not only a game designer, she's also a storyteller, and, as in



MASK OF ETERNITY

www.sierrastudios.com

Developer	Sierra Studios
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Pending
Price	\$49.95
Order #	70090
Phone	1.800.757.7707



KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN: You have much to learn from the Non-Player Characters. Top: Connor and the Spirit Hero. Bottom: The Ferry Man.

"Your journey will question everything you believe to be the truth and include both minor and major tests of your strength."

Mask has been in production for over three years, and while the finished product may look unlike any other *King's Quest*, Williams' gift for unraveling a tale through the computer is very much present, and in many ways it has been aided by significant advances in technology.

But I haven't played these games before!

Roberta Williams' career in game design began in 1980 (*Mystery House*, the first computer game to combine graphics with text), and her pioneering work in the *King's Quest* series stretches back to 1983 (*King's Quest I: Quest for the Crown*, the first 3D computer game). This may seem daunting—how can you possibly catch up?—but in truth it isn't.

Williams is too good a storyteller to leave any of her audience behind. This was true of *King's Quest I*, it was true of *King's Quest IV (The Perils of Rosella)*, the first computer game to feature a female hero), and it's definitely true of *King's Quest VIII: Mask of Eternity*. Mask, you'll discover, tells an entirely new story within the sumptuous tapestry of the series and introduces new elements that will delight even tried-and-true fans of the previous installments.

Just a regular Joe... or Connor

Mask of Eternity transports you to the Kingdom of Daventry, where you assume the role of a young peasant named Connor. You happen to be outside your house when cosmic winds sweep by carrying a golden shard of something. It lands at your feet. What is it? You don't know, but as you pick up the fragment to inspect it, everyone around you turns into gray stone, with their last facial expression engraved on the outer surface of the rock. Perhaps that golden piece has protected you from some cataclysmic plague?

The village is practically abandoned, but a wizard stands by the water, half-stone and half-man, and he begins to tell you the tale of how the sacred Mask of Eternity—a universal myth that everyone accepts as the symbol of peace and order—has been shattered into five pieces. Now the creatures of darkness are beginning to rise. Since you were the only one to be holding a piece of the Mask, and hence were not turned to stone, it seems you're the only one who can turn back the forces of evil. Your life—Connor's life—has been injected with a jolt of meaning. You now have a quest to save the world and become a hero. Knowing *King's Quest*, your journey will question everything you believe to be the truth and include both minor and major tests of your strength and convictions.

As you start to roam through the quiet realm of Daventry, it will quickly become apparent that

BRAINS AND BRAWN

"In so many adventure games, doing the wrong thing means that you instantly die," says Mark Seibert. "For this game, we didn't want to make the situation so black and white, so we added a 'health' bar and a combat system that is best classified as a highly simplified role-playing-game model." Combat is part of the adventure (another first for *King's Quest*), although it is far from the twitch-esque action one might expect. As players advance through the treacherous realms of the game, they will gain experience points, along with new weapons, armor, and a mystical array of spells that include shield, strength, and much more. In later parts of the game, players will even go into villages and buy and sell weapons and armor.

As is always the case, the strategic element of combat is such a vital part of *Mask of Eternity* and can be both a tool and a danger. "You are going to need to plan your attacks in this game," cautions Seibert. "Expect to be hit by enemies, because they are smart and some can be very strong." Although combat is not the primary focus of *Mask of Eternity*—that remains the storytelling and puzzles—it's an integral element of the game's mentally and physically challenging 3D world.

"...creatures of darkness have started to inhabit the land and vicious enemies are about to attack."

Williams has a rich new tool in her storytelling arsenal: a completely new 3D engine that champions exploration and exudes ambiance. You can roam around the world for hours as a new-age Vasco da Gama or Marco Polo, searching hidden crevasses for the mysterious and the unexpected. Whereas previous *King's Quests* have limited your view of the world, this one allows you to look at buildings from different perspectives and gives you complete freedom in your control of Connor and the camera. You can walk around in the third-person or even switch to first-person to see through Connor's eyes.



MULTI-FACETED JOURNEY: Connor strives to restore order in one of the many puzzles (top) and meets King Mudge in the swamp (bottom).

As Connor you'll also see that creatures of darkness have already started to inhabit the land of Daventry and that vicious enemies are about to attack. You'll have to quickly gain experience in fighting. At the same time, you'll want to thoroughly search the buildings in Daventry for armor and weapons to protect you from what will quickly

turn into a more significant and challenging quest than you originally envisioned.

The cardinal virtues

The Mask upholds three virtues—truth, light, and order—which must be restored so the world can become its old self. The pieces of the Mask were scattered through-

Otherworldly Weapons

Though Connor is from peasant stock, you shouldn't assume he isn't bright. The shard of the Mask has fallen into very capable hands. Connor knows how to best take advantage of whatever weapons he might find on his quest. Four of those weapons are not mundane items such as swords or staves—they're potions:

The Potion of Shield

This potion increases the user's defensive capabilities by half. It only lasts a few seconds, so it might be best-suited for combat.



The Potion of Strength

This one increases the user's strength by half. It too lasts just a few seconds, though in a fight to the finish that might be just enough to turn the tide in the wielder's favor.



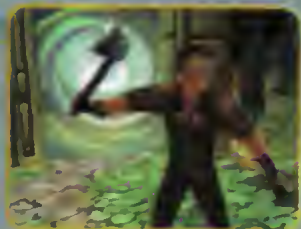
The Potion of Invisibility

Being invisible is not the same as being invincible! This powerful potion must be used with care, because if you strike enemies they'll know from which direction you struck. You might want to use this to just sneak by your opponents! The Potion of Invisibility is another short-acting potion.



The Potion of Reveal

According to Mark Seibert, this potion "reveals things that are illusory or magical." In other words, an object's true nature will be revealed to you. The Potion of Reveal can show you what's being cloaked by a wizard's spell or help you solve a puzzle—provided that you're looking in the right direction when the potion takes effect. Because this is the most complex of all the potions, its power lasts the longest.






TRIAL BY FIRE: The vertical poles shoot fireballs: the platforms shoot flames into the air. Don't try this at home!

out the world, and you'll have to embark on a Homeric journey to retrieve all the remaining pieces (so much for meandering around Daventry). From the Dimension of Death to the Frozen Reaches of the World, from the core of a volcano to a swamp filled with poisonous water, Connor's quest quickly grows in complexity and scope.

You'll find opportunities to embark on side quests as well, such as a trip to the Underground Realm of the Gnomes, where an

ancient society powered by the virtues of hope and faith has all but been destroyed. Can you restore their hope and faith and find the missing fragment of the Mask that represents light in the Underground realm? More importantly, will you be able to collect the missing pieces of the Mask and re-ignite the inspiration the Mask represents for society?

What Keen said about the ice-berg is also true about *Mask of Eternity*: Screenshots only show the very tip of what this game is all about. The images may convey the notion of a game heavy on combat and light on story, but the truth is anything but. *Mask of Eternity* is a tapestry of eclectic visuals, lush symphonic music, and a personal story about what defines who we are and what we believe.

In many ways, the new visual system for the game is simply a tool that helps Roberta Williams seed her majestic universe with a new exploratory feel, yet maintain the same lofty level of character development, story, and puzzles that gamers have come to expect from the *King's Quest* series. *King's Quest: Mask of Eternity* is as much a personal journey that challenges the myths you hold as truths as it is an entertaining adventure game. 

"From the Dimension of Death to the Frozen Reaches of the world, from the core of a volcano to a swamp filled with poisonous water, Connor's quest quickly grows..."



Push and Shove

Besides creating one of the most visually striking *King's Quest* games to date, the new 3D engine employed in *Mask of Eternity* makes possible an entirely new style of puzzle design never before seen in the series.

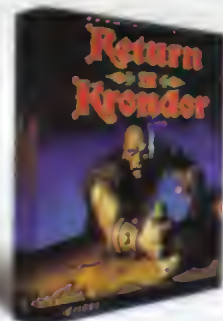
Thanks to the player's total control of Connor, "we've designed a lot of puzzles that focus around the player jumping or perhaps pushing an object in the environment," says Mark Seibert, producer of *Mask*. Players will also use objects such as a hook and a rope to climb walls, and their weapons can also be used to help in solving puzzles—for example, in chopping down a tree to cross a river.

The 3D engine also allows the designers to create much more engaging puzzles, along with an extraordinary array of inventory items that players will need to solve challenges throughout the seven worlds of *Mask*.





RPG Renaissance



RETURN TO KRONDOR

www.sierrastudios.com

Developer	Sierra Studios
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Pending
Price	\$49.95
Order #	70559
Phone	1.800.757.7707

Raymond Feist invites you back to Midkemia to battle evil in *Return to Krondor*

By Nathan Damattia

AFTER A HARROWING development process worthy of its own book,

Return to Krondor, the official sequel to the best-selling role-playing game (RPG) *Betrayal at Krondor* is about to be released. Fans of fantasy writer Raymond E. Feist's work, upon whose prose the entirety of *Return to Krondor* (RtK) and the world of Midkemia is based, will find lots to love in this much-anticipated sequel, as will newer fans of the fantasy-role-playing genre, who may not know *Betrayal at Krondor* (BaK) at all.

Many sequels have promised to please both the hard-core RPG lover and the newcomer, and many have failed miserably to please either audience. This is the tightrope a sequel must walk—how to interest the veteran without losing the rookie in unfamiliar territory. RtK would seem to have an excellent chance of walking that tightrope successfully, and for two reasons: one, the bedrock on which it's based, meaning the story that drives it; and two, the gameplay that will make this story fun, as executed by Sierra Studios and

their partner, PyroTechnix.

The bedrock comes first. You can have the coolest inventory system in the world, or the most amazing fighting engine, but if the the grand purpose behind your troubles is to simply "save the princess," odds are you will quickly tire. Plot is of paramount importance. The who, what, where, when, and, most importantly, the why, must be crystal-clear; they must practically demand your attention. Otherwise, all the fancy graphics technology and gameplay models in the world aren't going to be of much interest.

Raymond E. Feist passes this test with flying colors. Returning once again to the world of Midkemia that he made famous with his *Riftwar* novels (*Prince of the Blood* and *The King's Buccaneer*) and in *BaK*, Feist invites players into a scenario of intrigue. At the center is the Tear of

the Gods, a holy relic to a mysterious people called the Ishapians.

Bear for hire

An evil maniac by the name of Sidi—he was, incidentally, “driven” maniacally evil by direct contact with the mind of Nalor, the God of Evil—wants the Tear of the Gods. The reason for this desire is twofold. First, in Sidi’s hands, the Tear could serve as an eye for Nalor into our realm. Second, Sidi hopes that the Tear will serve as a direct link between him and Nalor, providing him with unheard-of power.

To get the Tear, Sidi hires a shady, underworld-crime-boss type by the name of The Crawler to retrieve the artifact from an Ishapian ship as it is being transported off Widows Point. Not wanting to get his hands dirty, The Crawler subcontracts an extremely disagreeable character by the name of Bear to do the job for him. Sidi gives Bear a magical amulet to aid him in his quest; in addition to protecting the pirate, the amulet literally sucks the evil out of Bear and brings it to the surface, turning the previously disagreeable Bear into a hate-filled villain.

Once in possession of the amulet, Bear moves on the Ishapian ship as it passes the treacherous Widows Point. The Ishapian priests unleash all their magic on Bear, but



to no avail. The amulet soaks up everything they’ve got and then some. What the pirate didn’t count on was the Ishapian ship sinking from the damage it received in battle, taking the dead priests and the Tear of the Gods with it to a watery grave near the Temple of Nalor, far below the Bitter Sea’s surface.

You can run but you can’t hide

Bear’s first mate, a disreputable gent named Knute, uses the ensuing chaos as an opportunity to escape with some treasure from the sinking ship. Knute, it appears, watched in growing horror as the amulet brought forth the venomous hatred buried in Bear; he figures that now’s the perfect chance to escape.

Back in Krondor, Knute—with the help of Lucas the innkeeper—buries the treasure in the sewers beneath the town. Unfortunately for the both of them, Bear also returns to Krondor looking for people to help him lift the Ishapian ship off the seafloor. He discovers Knute’s activities and decides that he—and anyone else who knows anything about Sidi or the Tear—must be exterminated.

That’s where you come in. Using one of five characters (Squire



POPULATION EXPLOSION: Krondor boasts a vast array of characters—and each seems to have his or her own agenda.

James, a reformed thief; the Keshian sorceress Jazhara; the warrior William ConDoin, son of the magician Pug; a roughhewn Warrior-Priest of Ishap named Brother Solon; and Kendaric, the reluctant wizard whose magic is the group’s only hope of victory), you have to beat Bear in his quest for the Tear of the Gods or suffer the almost unimaginably horrible consequences.

RtK advances through 10 chapters to its final resolution. Each chapter focuses on the adventures

“You can have the coolest inventory system in the world, but if your grand purpose is to simply ‘save the princess,’ odds are you will quickly tire.”



"The combat system is just as important to the enjoyment of the game as the conversation."



NEW KID IN TOWN?: You'll have much to explore in Krondor's 2,000 different backgrounds in 200 different locations.

of a particular subsection of the game's main characters. Characters join and leave the main party according to the circumstances of the story, not to create false suspense or because it was convenient. The intention of the game's designers was to create an experience for the player as much like being a character in a Raymond Feist novel as possible.

The next major issue, then, is the execution of all the above: How will

co-developers PyroTechnix and Sierra Studios make the "playing" of this plot fun?

Conversation, combat, and maneuvering

RtK's three most important game-play aspects are conversation, combat, and maneuvering, each of which relies heavily on the technology PyroTechnix developed for the game. As in all RPGs, the thing you need concern yourself with most is

TALK TECH TO ME

Prior to taking up the challenge of RtK, PyroTechnix was a well-known graphics software company, so it's no surprise that they're pushing RtK's graphics engine as far as possible. To breathe life into the game, the company is using its own 3D engine, called, appropriately enough, True 3D. This isn't just some random, half-baked technology; Sony has licensed it for use in two of their online games. True 3D's biggest strength is its ability to merge brilliantly detailed, 16-bit backgrounds (there are a staggering 2,000 of them in RtK) with surprisingly detailed 3D models. In RtK, the effect mimics nature at its best, as you'll see when you maneuver your 3D character through meticulously detailed streets, with a full moon glowing ominously in the star-bespeckled sky.

gathering information: Who do I need to find to complete my quest? Where are they? If I need to fight them, what do I need to succeed?

These types of questions are answered, naturally, through conversation. When you walk up to any of the myriad Non-Player Characters to try to gather this information, you'll instantly see just how much effort has been spent on making the NPCs believable. While there are a host of NPCs who will aid you in your quest, there are still more who will either talk about meaningless matters or even lead you down the wrong path into a subplot! Part of the charm of this series is that it knows when to lighten up. Sometimes you'll want to talk to everyone in a village, not out of grm determination to track down an



FOR THE GOOD OF THE GROUP: You'll have to forge alliances to beat the Bear—this is not a quest for a lone adventurer.

elusive conversational clue, but simply because the game is populated with colorful, earthy, eccentric, and occasionally loony characters. The NPCs represent every corner of Midkemian culture, from princes, politicians, merchants, and weapons dealers to thieves, witches, town drunks, and crazed prophets.

When all's said and done, though, talking only gets you so far. The combat system is just as important to the enjoyment of the game as the conversation. The Midkemian fighting rules that have been present in all of Feist's work are executed in true 3D; alchemy, long-range weapons, and melee weapons all fit into *RtK*'s turn-based fighting suite. And while this list of fighting features might at first seem daunting to the newbies, PyroTechnix has made sure that you'll be able to throw a boomerang or cast a spell of immolation with the best of them

in no time—even if you've never played an RPG before.

Maneuvering through the game world is the final—and graphically most pleasing—aspect of *RtK*'s gameplay package. You'll find in *RtK* more than 2,000 different backgrounds comprising 200 different, explorable locations—hours upon hours of investigating the innumerable details with which PyroTechnix is imbuing all of the locations. And they're not just pretty to look at; many of the locations will be riddled with traps, just waiting for an unwary or overly curious player to grab something without thinking....

Krondor is waiting. Return now for an adventure alongside intriguing characters as they use their wits, their weapons, and their magic to restore the central artifact of a great faith and bring peace to the land. **P**

Cast of Characters



Squire James: Squire to the Prince of Krondor and a thief ("Jimmy the Hand") who's mended his ways. James rose from the streets to prove himself a loyal follower of Arutha. When Bear wreaks havoc in Krondor, James gladly accepts the task of bringing the notorious pirate to justice.



Brother Solon: A devout priest of the Temple of Ishap. Brother Solon has been chosen to represent his temple and aid Squire James in the quest to bring Bear to justice and reclaim the Tear of the Gods.



Jazhara: A young sorceress from Kesh, recently appointed the Court Mage of Krondor. Jazhara has strived to keep herself apart from the political machinations of her family and her homeland, though she remains proud of both. Extremely gifted in the magical arts.



Kendaric: Senior journeyman at the Krondor Wrecker's Guild. Began life as an impoverished, half-Keshian bastard; now wears only the finest, most elaborate robes.



William ConDoin: Son of Pug, the famed magician who was adopted by the ConDoin family for his heroism in the Riftwar. Displayed a talent for magic in his youth, but grew up to become a warrior.

THE CARS ARE THE STARS



The thrill of driving these retro rockets-on-wheels is what keeps you coming back for more in *Grand Prix Legends*

By Mark H. Walker



GRAND PRIX LEGENDS

www.sierra.com/gpl

Developer	Papyrus
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Kids to Adults
Price	\$49.95
Order #	70481
Phone	1.800.757.7707

FORGET GRAPHICS, FORGET realism, forget racing's Golden Era. That's not what Papyrus' *Grand Prix Legends* is about. *GPL* is about feel—that nearly indescribable, you-are-there sensation that keeps you glued to your computer long into the wee hours of the morning.

"Driving a *Grand Prix Legends* car is like riding a bucking bull," says Rich Yasi, the game's co-designer. "These beasts are living, breathing, fire-snorting entities."

And well they should be. David Kaemmer, Chief Technical Officer and founder of Papyrus, is a racing-

simulation legend. The driving force behind such classics as *Indy 500*, *IndyCar II*, and *NASCAR 2*, he has put his considerable expertise to work in designing a spanking-new physics engine that models every aspect of a 1967 Formula One race car.

Unparalleled realism, nuts and bolts simulation, yadda, yadda, yadda. You've heard it all before. All too frequently these words are tossed about by coat-and-tie ad execs who wouldn't know a Lotus from a lemming. Not so with *GPL*.

"There is a difference," claims Yasi. "In the past some effects, such

as the dip of a Winston Cupper's nose under braking, were canned. In other words, the nose was coded to dip when the brakes were applied. There's none of that in *Grand Prix Legends*. Each and every part of the car is modeled. The drive train, the clutch, the suspension and tires at all four corners—it's all accounted for. When the nose dips in *GPL*, it's because of the laws of physics acting on the chassis, not just a programmer's code."

Fire-breathers in the stable

That may sound like mumbo jumbo, but the first time you drift an Eagle T1G through Eau Rouge, you'll be a believer. From the throaty mumble-roar of the engine to the slide-catch-drift feel of the tires when cornering, this feels like a real-life 415hp, 1,100-pound rocket-on-wheels.

Furthermore, there are plenty of rockets to choose from. Nearly

every car that graced a track in 1967 is included in *Grand Prix Legends*: the Lotus 49 (the first Grand Prix car powered by a Ford engine), the Ferrari 312 (the engine sound is to die for), the championship-winning Repco-Brabham, and the only American car to win a Grand Prix—the Eagle T1G.

Each GPL racer is based on the exact power-to-weight ratio, wheelbase, and track (distance between the front or rear tires) of its real counterpart. Better still, you can *feel*—there's that word again—the difference. The Lotus

49, for example, is powerful, and its wide track makes it stable in high-speed bends. The nimble Repco-Brabham is a tad underpowered, but its shorter wheelbase enables it to flat-out move in tight corners.

The cars are the stars. But *GPL*'s supporting cast—the race tracks—provides the backdrop on which the stars parade. (The graphics are breathtaking, but hell, every piece of software churned out by the industry today has breathtaking graphics.) What sets *GPL* apart is the cause of the wind in-sucking. The verdant shrubbery and rolling

hills that adorn Watkins Glen, the quaint Euroshops bordering Monaco, the towering trees of Mosport: these are the Gillian Andersons of racing simulations—not only beautiful, but provocatively so.

Nevertheless, these magically real tracks are there but for one reason—to race on. The tracks exist to provide a venue, a time machine,

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS TAKES US BACK TO A TIME WHERE SAFETY WAS A SECONDARY CONCERN TO SPEED...

—HOTGAMES.COM

a sensation. The tracks exist so that we may race; they exist so that we, above all else, may feel. Feel what it was like to tame a gracefully bucking bronco, feel what it was like to dive under Jim Clark—your tires screaming for traction—as you enter the Loews Hairpin at Monaco. And feel is what *Grand Prix Legends* is all about. Not graphics, not realism, not eras, just feel.

The Magnificent Seven: A GPL Primer

There's more to driving than mashing an accelerator (usually called the "throttle" in racing circles). While I'm no Jim Clark, I have spent considerable time tooling around *GPL*'s tracks. Here's my advice. (Note: I assume you're using either a wheel-and-pedal or stick-and-pedal combination. Anything else makes going quickly a little too tough.)

1. GO SLOW

To go fast, you must go slow; rapid, jerky movements unbalance the car. *An unbalanced car spins, a spinning car loses.* Apply each input—be it throttle, brake, or steering wheel—as slowly as circumstances allow. You can't snail-mail your throttle inputs to the car, but you can (and must) avoid jabbing the throttle, jumping on the brakes, or

violently wrenching the steering wheel.

SQUEEEEE the throttle; quickly, but not abruptly. Gradually apply pressure to the brakes; turn the steering wheel as slowly as the situation permits. Remember, this is a living entity that Kaemmer et al. have created. There is an equal and opposite reaction to every action. Be gentle.



THE FEEL OF GPL: Don't try this with the family Explorer.



MILES OR KILOMETERS?: No matter what the language, whether at Watkins Glen, Monaco, or Mosport, the prize is still the same—the checkered flag.

A Lap of the Glen

The track is 30 years younger, yet NASCAR 2 drivers will have no problem recognizing Watkins Glen circa 1967. Of course they'll also note that there is no inner loop—this was way before the tragedies that led to the loop's construction. Let's take a lap to get the feel of a Lotus 49. Even with me behind the wheel, this should give you a taste of what it's like to pilot one of these beautiful beasts.



1. Cross the Start/Finish line in third gear, the Ford Cosworth engine howling in your ears.

Gently brush the brakes as you pass the starter's stand. Apply an even throttle and ease into the soft right-hand bend. The chassis will cant left and the rear tires will chirp as they struggle to grip the pavement. Squeeze on the gas to catch the tail and scramble out of the corner.



2. Shift into fourth in the short uphill chute between 1 and 2. Pitch your car into the left-hander at the end of turn one. Aim for the curb on the left side. Your momentum will carry you just to the right. Get hard on the throttle and drift the car within a foot of the right side of the track. Turn into the top-of-the-hill right-hander just before the corner-station hay bales. Work the throttle to stay on the dark line drawn by the rubber of other drivers' tires. If you drift wide, smoothly pump the throttle. This will swing out the tail, which in turn points you toward the inside of the corner, which keeps you on line, which keeps you off the grass.



- 3.

Exit the corner at full song and

pop it into fifth. If this is your first time in a Grand Prix car, keep a light grip on the steering; sawing the wheel—however slightly—will put you off-course.



6. You're really moving now—unfortunately, you need to get really **unmoving** by the next corner. Wait till the sweeper's lateral G-forces have dissipated (usually just before the final right-side white sign) and brake.

Snap it into third and bend your charge into the right-hander. Dial in a medium throttle and hold your drift to the middle of the track. Take the ensuing left-hander on the inside and smoothly accelerate toward the final turn. Brake, downshift to second, and head for the inside of the corner. Get on the throttle as soon as you can, grab third gear at the start/finish, and another lap is in the books.



5. The car will enter the right-hand sweeper, slide toward the outside of the turn, and then catch. Keep a steady pedal through the corner.

Accelerate as you blast by the last sign on the left, unwind the steering toward the exit, and rocket away. Snatch fourth, then fifth, and scream down the straight. Glue your foot to the floor as you sweep through the straight-ending left-hander and get ready for some fun.



- 4.

Check your mirrors as you

approach the

end of the straight. Those motherboard drivers love to sneak by here. Brake firmly at the red marker and grab third gear. Make sure you have all your braking done before you reach the crest of the hill. Frequently, braking after the crest will throw your car into a right-hand spin as the left side loses traction at the crest.

2. GO SLOW, PART 2

There's an old saying: "All things are hard before they are easy." Despite its age, this adage holds true for *Grand Prix Legends*. Driving a racing car is a tough job. Don't make it tougher by installing the game, hopping into a Grand Prix (the fastest of the three car classes provided), and hoping for the best. Start with the Novice Trainer: once you can run 10 reasonably quick, crash-free laps, move up to the Advanced Trainer. Once again, practice until you can string quite a few incident-free laps together. Only then are you ready for a Grand Prix car.

3. GO STRAIGHT

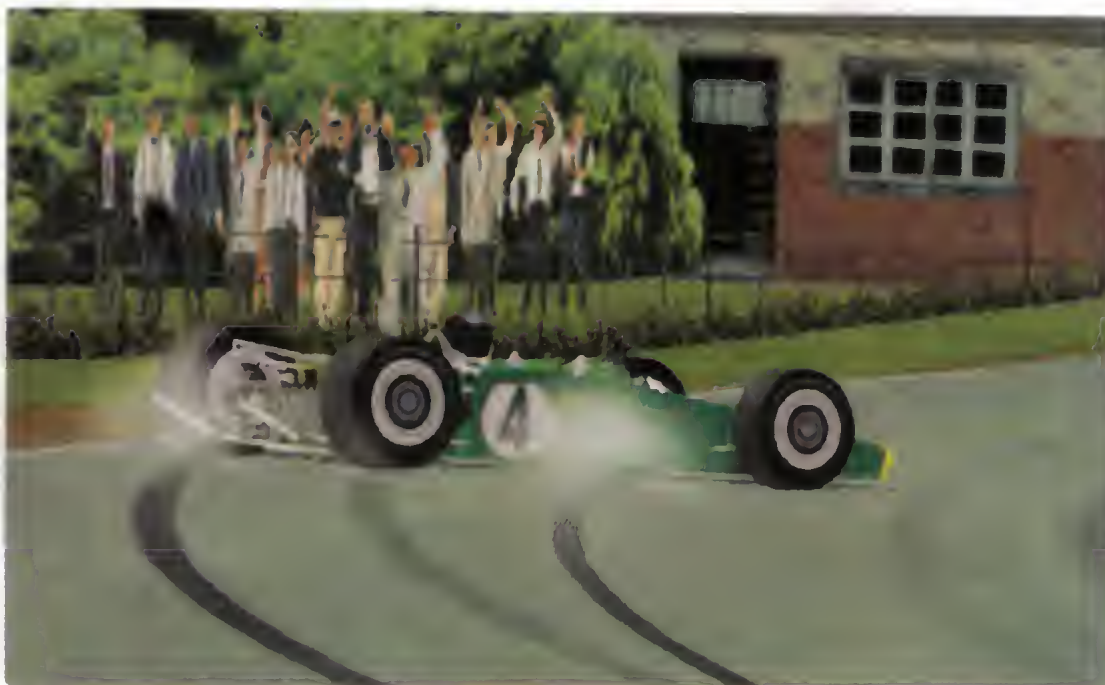
Corners are for cornering; do everything else on the straight-aways. Braking and shifting upset the balance of your car. Brake and downshift *before* you get to a corner. Select a gear that will let you accelerate out of the corner without shifting—at least until you have the car straightened out. Shifting as you accelerate away from a corner's apex (more or less the middle of a corner) will momentarily unload (i.e., lighten) the rear suspension and induce a spin (see #1).

"...IDEAL FOR
RACING FANS
SICK
OF HOW EASY TODAY'S
BOY RACERS
HAVE IT."

—HOTGAMES.COM

4. BUT NOT ALWAYS

Once you're comfortable with your Lotus 49, you'll find corners in which you can leave your braking on a smidgen longer, and keep a slight pressure on the brake as you enter the corner. This technique, called trail-braking, has



AN UNBALANCED CAR SPINS, A SPINNING CAR LOSES: Rapid, jerky movements will unbalance your car. Avoid jabbing the throttle, jumping on the brakes, or violently wrenching the steering wheel. Squeeze the throttle, gradually apply the brakes, turn the steering wheel as slowly as the situation permits. Be gentle with these beasts!

a couple of advantages over traditional straight-line braking. Advantage number one: You can brake later, hence reducing lap times. Advantage number two: Braking as you enter the corner will lighten the rear suspension and induce rear-wheel drift. This in turn will often help a driver aim the front wheels at the exit of a corner and increase overall cornering speed.

5. THE MOST IMPORTANT CORNER

Learn the track. Not just where the turns are, but where the *important* turns are. Hands down, the most important turn on any course is the turn before the longest straight. For example, at Mosport it's the east hairpin; at Watkins Glen it's the turn-three sweeper. Getting these

corners right is the single most important ingredient to quick laps.

What exactly is right? Well, the sooner—within reason—you accelerate out of a corner, the higher your terminal velocity (i.e., speed) on the ensuing straight. The higher your velocity, the lower


your lap time. So, how fast you exit these corners is more important than how fast you enter them.

6. STAY AWAY FROM THE GARAGE

There is no speed in the tinkering you can do in the garage—at least not for the beginning-to-intermediate driver. The reason you aren't as fast as your more experienced brethren is not the PSI settings of your front tires, but rather the loose nut behind the wheel—you! The cars' default settings are plenty good enough to put you on the victory podium. Wait till you know how to drive *before* fooling with the chassis.

Unlike today's high-tech racers, drivers of this era frequently drove an entire race weekend with very few modifications to the car. I figure if it worked for Jim Clark, it ought to work for us.

7. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Rich Yasi (*GPL*'s co-designer) once told me it takes a thousand laps to learn a track. I've never counted, but that feels right. There is no substitute for track time. Get in the car, learn the track, and then cut lap after lap. It's not easy, but then if it was, anyone could do it. 





Crunch Time!



Football Pro '99

www.sierrasports.com

Developer	Sierra Sports
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Kids to Adults
Price	\$29.95
Order #	70459
Phone	1.800.757.7707

Don't call it a comeback—Football Pro '99 has changed right along with its ever-more-sophisticated audience

By Todd Mowatt

THE FRONT PAGE SPORTS: Football series has won several awards and many, many fans since its inception in 1993. But in that time, computers—and the people who use them—have changed much faster than the game of football. “Our original target audience has grown up,” says D’Andre Pritchett, the designer of *Football Pro '99*. “And while the Front Page Sports games pushed the limits for computers of their time, now they have to push the limits of computers of our time.”

It fell to Pritchett and his team to meet that challenge. Over the past year, all of the Sierra sports games were reorganized into one division (logically named “Sierra Sports”), and the *Front Page Sports: Football* name was retired. But the changes in *Football Pro '99*

are more than just turf-deep. If the series has been growing with its audience and its technology (“We had to go through puberty, I guess,” Pritchett laughs), you could say it’s now arrived in adulthood.

High-tech leap ahead

Sierra Sports began by scrapping the game’s trusty 3D engine, replacing it with an engine that was roughly two years in the making. Gamers can expect improved ball physics, where wind speed and other weather factors will affect how the ball flies through the air.

The Artificial Intelligence (AI)

OGR.COM SEZ: “This baby is primed to pump the fountain of arcade gameplay while satiating the appetite of hardcore simulation buffs.”



PLAYING GOD: For those people who need to be in charge of everything, the ability to change the weather provides the ultimate game control.

has also been boosted into the future. Now each player on the field will have his own individual AI. In *FPS: Football '97*, the AI reacted to the entire situation taking place on offense or defense; in *Football Pro '99*, each player will know his position and know where he is supposed to go in any given situation. A linebacker, for example, knows he is a linebacker and acts like he is a linebacker.

"Last year all of the players in the game had the same strength—this year we realized that the quarterbacks needed arm strength to throw the ball and defenders needed another kind of strength,"

explains Michael Branham, the director of *Football Pro '99*. "Last year a great big linebacker had the same strength as the quarterback or a defensive back. That wasn't as realistic as we wanted it, so we factored in overall strength and arm strength."

In fact, more than 20 different physical attributes went into the modeling of the players, including height, weight, and speed. To further bolster the realism, Pritchett's team borrowed actual college football players to motion-capture a range of common movements, including tackling, juking, running, diving, sacking, and throwing—all

of which they used to breathe life into the movement of the players in *Football Pro '99*.

Calling all die-hards

Longtime followers of the *FPS: Football* franchise will find improvements in penalties and injuries as well as an entirely new play-calling interface. *Football Pro '99* even features "unbalanced" trades. In last year's version you could only trade one-for-one, two-for-two, three-for-three, and so on. Now you can trade one player for two plus a draft pick or any one of a number of real-life NFL trading combinations.

There are more statistical categories and better historical-stats tracking. Now each season's stats can be kept in a single season-stats file or you can save it as a career-stats file.

One for the books

Gamers will notice that the Play Edit feature of the game has been transformed. This year, users will see more of a "chalkboard" approach to play-editing. You can choose a formation and then pick a play depending on the situation you are currently faced with in the game. You'll also be able to design your own plays and add them to your playbook.

Once you've designed a play, you can take it out and try it in the

ONLINE HEAD-BUTTING

Gamers itching to butt heads online will be pleased with *Football Pro '99*'s multiplayer features. Free games will be hosted by World Opponent Network (www.won.net) in the Coaching mode and the Commissioner mode. In the Commissioner mode, all of the members of your league will connect with the Commissioner through WON on a particular day and at a particular time. You will hold your draft or trading session. The following week, once the trades are settled and everyone connects again, the trades will take effect.

Add to that such features as post-season scouting reports, free agency, player salaries, salary caps, and better remote league management, and you will soon realize the depth of NFL experience that Sierra Sports is striving to provide online.



24-7-420-GREEN-HUT!!: Each player in each position has attributes and abilities similar to real-life players in that position. The days of the touchdown-saving tackle by the kicker are over.



practice area. Run it against the various defenses to determine when it will work best—or whether you're just going to embarrass yourself if you ever have to resort to it!

Número Uno

The new General Manager mode will allow you to control rosters, trades, and draft picks. You make the decisions (if you're in a hurry

or curious about what a computer can do or you're just lazy, you can let the computer make the decisions). The computer AI was able to manage your team in the past, but the Improved AI of *Football Pro '99* brings considerably more brainpower to the task.

One of the newest and most innovative features in this year's game is the Commissioner mode (Internet only). The Commissioner sets up the league and is in complete control of its workings. Among the things that can be controlled in the

A Flip Play feature is also new this year: players can hit a button on the controller to flip the play and run it to the other side of the field. Audibles have also been handled differently this year, so you can set your audibles and then choose them by pressing the number of the play you wish to switch to when at the line of scrimmage.

OGR.COM ALSO SEZ: "The designers have listened with both ears and a radar to the complaints aimed at prior football titles and they're determined to fix every damn one of them."

BILLIONAIRE FOR A DAY

Football is a game of preparation and precise timing, where the best players not only out-muscle but also out-think the opposition. Football is also a game of money, and if you don't have enough, your team won't be able to out-muscle or out-think anybody. The *Football Pro '99* team set out to duplicate this game-within-a-game.

"I took a copy of the NFL's collective-bargaining agreement," D'Andre says, "and wrote it up in terms that a human being could understand." Now gamers can plot strategy in the football and the financial realms. Team owners can rake in the bucks from stadium revenues (ticket prices, concessions) and advertising and broadcast revenues from the league. At the same time, you'll have to shell out millions to your players (good news, capitalists: there's a salary cap!) and underwrite basic operating expenses, including keeping that expensive stadium in good repair. According to Pritchett, on the money side you'll be able to do everything that real owners do, except wring concessions from local governments by threatening to move someplace else.

For gamers who don't have a head for figures, you can turn aspects of the financial model off or even play without it. But in the real world, teams in all sports must keep one eye on the field and one on the bottom line. Give it a try—you'll find that using the financial model only deepens the strategy.

Commissioner mode are the length of quarters, the ability to change or modify the league, final determinations on player trading and drafting issues, and responsibility for overseeing the league's financial model.

If you're a fan of football on your desktop, check out the rebirth of a veteran franchise when *Football Pro '99* debuts this fall. **W**

The package looked hot.
The descriptions were glowing.
The screen shots sizzled.

And my fifty went up in smoke.



Choosing a game by the packaging is always risky. They all look good. That's why you need to go to GameSpot. There you can download the latest demos so you can try before you buy, read in-depth reviews by top editors and gamers, get hints and tips to play better and much more. **AND, IT'S ALL FREE.** So before you buy another game, go to GameSpot... because you've got better things to burn than your money.

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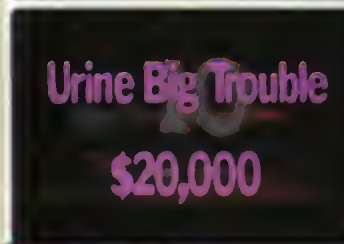
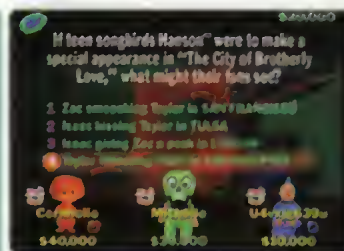
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HeadRush Nation



Geriatric Gen Xers, beware! HeadRush turns trivia inside-out for the Next Generation

By Candi Strecker



HEADRUSH

www.headrush.com

Developers	Berkeley & Jellyvision
Format	WIN95/MAC CD
Rating	Teen
Price	\$29.95
Order #	70573
Phone	1.800.757.7707

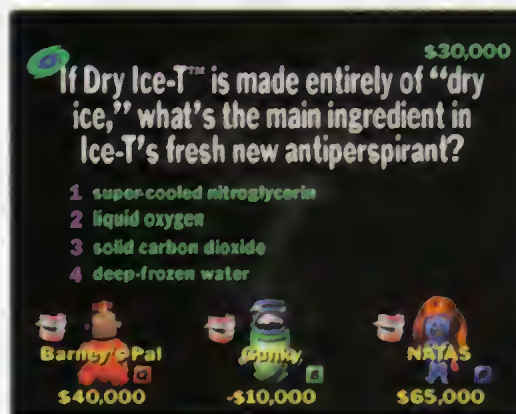
REMEMBER THAT SCENE in the movie *Spinal Tap* where a rocker proudly shows off his band's amplifiers, which go from One to Eleven instead of the usual One to Ten? I kept thinking about those amps as I played *HeadRush*, the newest trivia challenge from Berkeley Systems and Jellyvision, the creators of the *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK* series. I'm convinced they created this game on special equipment that has sarcasm settings going all the way up to eleven...maybe even twelve and a half.

HeadRush is a teen-oriented extension of the popular *YOU DON'T KNOW JACK*. Its questions

are drawn from pop-culture zones more familiar to members of Generation Next than their crusty Baby Boomer parents. But *HeadRush* also has a very different feel from *JACK*. Its barrage of edgy, extreme sounds and wacky jump-cut graphics will seem natural to a generation weaned on Jolt Cola, but may send elderly 30-year-olds hobbling off to their La-Z-Boy recliners to recover.

Baby Diva and her mutant toys


You're welcomed into the game by super-cool hostess Baby Diva. (Fun Factoid: If her teenspeak sounds especially authentic, it's because her voice is provided by a real high-school freshman.) She nudges you to jump in and select a player icon from her collection of mutant toys. Throughout the game, right answers make your icon do a little dance of glee. Mess up, and your




\$10,000

What's the best way to "masticate"?


- 1 with one hand
- 2 with two hands
- 3 with your nostrils
- 4 with your mouth



Barney's Pal
\$20,000



Gunkys
\$10,000



NATAS
\$30,000

icon spontaneously combusts into a crispy critter. Two or three can play in competition, or you can choose single-player mode (but expect Baby Diva to razz you about "playing with yourself").

Now you're tossed into the ring with Bob, the in-your-face host who hurls questions—and whip-fast insults—at *HeadRush*'s players. He's highly entertaining, but you wouldn't want to take him on in a sarcasm contest. Watch out for the punning category headings that frame each question. They can move you toward the right answer with a hint, or serve to short-circuit your thinking processes. And move fast—if you're too slow, Bob chooses categories and answers questions for you.

Before every question, there's a goofy mini-cartoon that will appeal to any fan of Ren and

Stimpy. Pimples, skeleton dogs, dancing devils and hillbillies—the usual subjects. Every other game round also includes animated ads; "Humpy Cola" and "Cordless Pigeon" are just two of a round dozen. Don't run out to the store looking for THESE imaginary products.

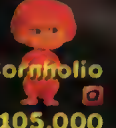
Bolsheviks vs. the Spice Girls

Under all the surface noise and deliberately obnoxious chatter, *HeadRush* blends equal parts book learning and pop culture, sometimes in the same question. (How fast can you deconstruct phrases such as "Power Bar Mitzvah" or "E=M.C. Hammer"?) You'll get points for knowing that the Bolshevik Revolution took place in Russia and that Saturn (the planet, not the car) has rings, but you'll also need to know about


\$10,000

If Sabrina the Teenage Witch™ gives in to peer pressure and starts smoking, which of these brands of cigarettes will she probably boycott?


- 1 Salem™
- 2 Camel™
- 3 Marlboro™
- 4 Newport™



Cornholio
\$105,000



Michelle
\$30,000



U4vxi639u
\$20,000

IF I WANTED ANY LIP FROM YOU...: Let's face it: you're smart, your friends are dumb. Use it to your advantage and bite 'em when they don't know the answer.

Smurfs and Skittles and Spice Girls and *South Park*. Just for fun, there are even a few purely subjective questions, like "What's the best Batman movie?" (*Obviously the first one.* — Editor)

Eleven questions (mostly multiple-choice) make up each *HeadRush* round, with right answers adding \$10,000 to \$30,000 to a player's score. Pick one of the special "Dis or Dats," and you get the solo opportunity to answer seven \$5,000 questions on a single topic. Just be ready to make split-second choices between *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*, prefix or suffix, Good Arnold or Bad Arnold (Schwarzenegger movies). The final question in each round is always a "HeadRush," a brutal test of reflexes and knowledge that can double a score and determine a winner in just a few intense minutes.

Don't let yourself be distracted by walk-on characters like Old Man and janitor Milan. Just as you lose yourself in their banter with host Bob, they'll whip out a question from their respective fields of expertise. Old Man's Moldy Memories come from back in the dark ages of the 1970s, but he helpfully slips you hints as the seconds tick by. Immigrant Milan likes to show off what he's learned in his night-school English classes—better know your gerunds, and whether it's "fart" or "spit" that's an irregular verb.

A BIG BLAST OF ASTROBOOGIE

The *HeadRush* CD will include three songs (one apiece) from bands that are designed to drive parents out of the house and possibly off the planet. The bands in question are 2 Skinnee J's (there are four guys in this outfit, but apparently two of them aren't skinnee), Swirl 360 (a duo, neither of them skinnee), and Motorbaby (a trio, non-skinnee).

The personnel in these bands have led interesting lives. The Swirl 360 guys are twins who went to a songwriting "boot camp" at a castle in France. Motorbaby's founder is a woman who taught herself to play guitar at 7 and their drummer played with The Cult and Spinal Tap.

The 2 Skinnee J's wear space suits on stage and have played with bands as different as Toots & the Maytals and The Dead Milkmen. That's what we call a resume!



"...you'll also need to know about **SMURFS** and **SKITTLES** and **SPICE GIRLS** and **SOUTH PARK.**"



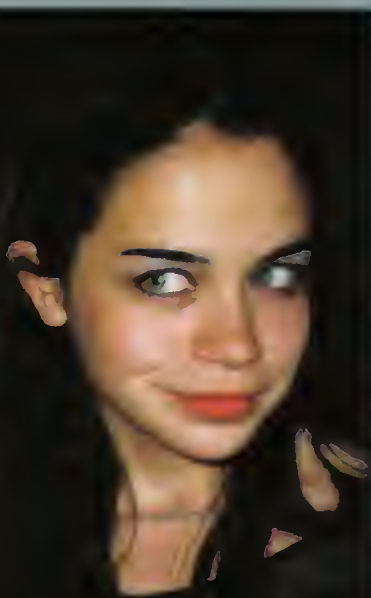
HeadRush Brain Trust

A look at some of the characters behind the scenes:

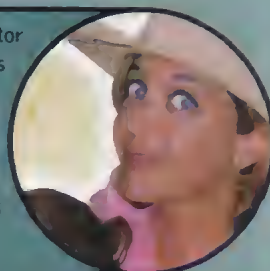
Baby Diva is a 15-year-old rocket-on-rollerblades. Michelle recruited the Diva for this gig. "She's a friend of mine," Michelle says, "and she quickly became my chief consultant on this project." The Diva was born Jennifer Jackson in Memphis, Tennessee. She's lived in Chicago the past four years. It was there that her friends, who couldn't help noting her regal manner, gave her her nickname: "I used them as my slaves, and they enjoyed it." Seems simple enough.

Baby Diva's consulting methods were also quite simple: "I just looked at what the writers wrote for me and shredded it." "She was allowed to riff," Michelle says of the Diva's work habits. "I lived in fear of her wrath." (Chris remembers her condemning a particularly heinous color that almost went on the HeadRush box with "Oh, that is so 1995!") Our heroine was stationed in a

5x5 padded booth to record her lines. The Diva began every session packed full of energy, but voice-acting is hard work—by the end of each session, she was prone on the floor with her Barbies and My Little Ponies. She then went home to recover, with her posters of Trent Reznor, Kurt Cobain, and Marilyn Manson. The result of her hard labor: **HeadRush!**



Michelle Gorchow is the producer/creative director on the Jellyvision end. She calls the creative shots on the game's look and feel, questions, sound effects, commercials, and music, yet still found time to impersonate The Nanny in HeadRush. Michelle prepared for her career in trivia by working as a film editor on the slasher movies *Howards End* and *The Remains of the Day*.



Andy Poland, co-creative director, is the guy who marks up the writers' copy with a big red pen. They fondly refer to him as "Satan." Andy also provides the voice of "Bob" (Mr. In-Your-Face), plays in various bands around Chicago when he's supposed to be working, and claims to have a poster of Tiffany on his wall.

Dana "Mama" Berkeley Systems' art director, over saw the artistic direction of the game, guiding the artists who imagined the animations from listening to the audio script. Dana and his team took a more traditional "pencil and paper" approach that gave HeadRush's animations an appealing Saturday-morning-cartoon look.

"Dana was too busy to send us a photo so we substituted this joker for him. Dana is much cuter than this." —Editor



Chris York, associate executive producer, rode herd on the Berkeley end of things, where they provided the technical expertise to make HeadRush fly and where they imagined, designed, and created the game's animations. What prepared him for The HeadRush Experience? "Having lots of brothers and sisters. I come from a large family."

"Better know your gerunds, and whether it's '**FART**' or '**SPIT**' that's an irregular verb."

Attack of the killer dentures

In case you haven't guessed by now, *HeadRush* is clearly tailored for players who've earned their PhD in Grossology before graduating from junior high. Expect plenty of questions on boogers, zits, and other bodily-function topics.

How many games let you bite your opponents? *HeadRush* does. It's a great strategic move if you know the answer to a question, and are sure that one of your opponents is clueless. Just hit the space bar after buzzing in and you can force another player to answer the question. If you guessed correctly that your opponent would blow the challenge, a set of animated dentures munches up that player's icon and you reap big points. If the player gets the question right, you're the one who gets chomped. It's all part of *HeadRush's* good clean teen fun. Just don't forget to floss afterwards. **!**

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

BONUS TIP: If you let HeadRush play out past the game's end, you get to listen to some silly skits and recording-session outtakes while viewing the creators' credits.



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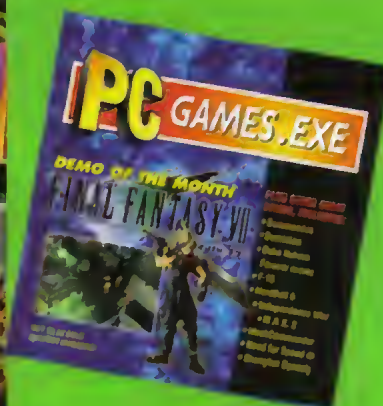
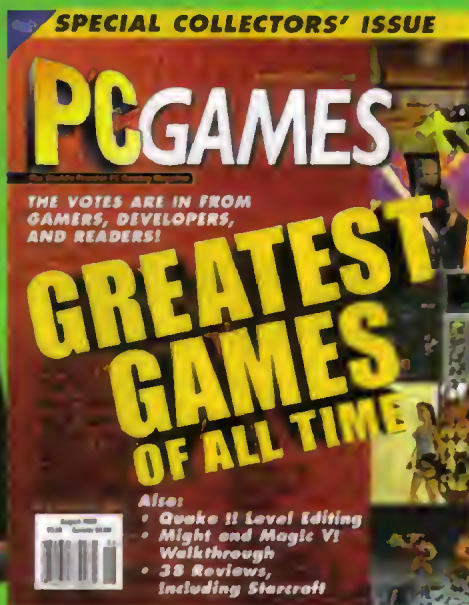
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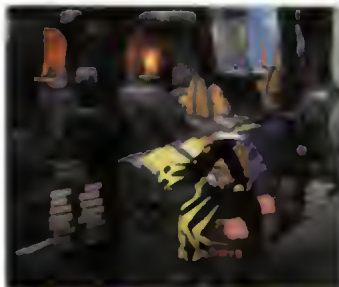
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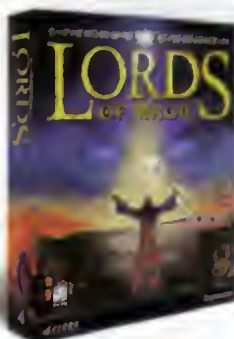
(Grin.)



Fear and Loathing in Urak

Lords of Magic returns with new weapons to wield, new spells to cast, and new roads to adventure

By Joshua Bentley



LORDS OF MAGIC SPECIAL EDITION

www.lordsofmagic.com

Developer	Sierra Studios
Format	WIN95 CD
Rating	Teen
Price	\$39.95
Order #	70582
Phone	1.800.757.7707

RARELY DOES A "SPECIAL Edition" truly honor the devotion fans have shown for the original version of the game. Inside that expensive new packaging there might be a fresh gaming experience, or there might be a rehash of the original with a few twists and turns tacked on. *Lords of Magic: Special Edition* from Impressions falls squarely in the first camp, offering new experiences for *Lords of Magic* fans and a series of five new quests in the *Special Edition's* *Legends of Urak Quest Pack*.

But for those of you who have

somehow never heard of *Lords of Magic*, let me backtrack a bit before getting into particulars about the *Special Edition*.

Balkoth vs. The World

Lords of Magic (and its *Special Edition*) is set in the land of Urak. It is a desperate time for the land. Balkoth, one of the most evil bastards to ever stroll the globe, has decided it's not enough for him to be a servant of Death—he now wants everyone to bow before him, or die.

The people of Urak need a leader to stop Balkoth. Other potential leaders have tried to defeat him, and have ended up as mystical mud pooling on the scorched earth. As the wise historian Balathustrius once said, "Do you think you have what it takes to defeat Balkoth? Many have come before you. All of them are dead. I won't relate the manner of their deaths, but let us say that what little remained of the bodies wouldn't have been sufficient to feed a hungry crow." It is your task to defeat Balkoth, restore order to Urak, and become a Lord of Magic.

Choose your character

To begin, you choose to play *Lords*





SPELUNKER'S DELIGHT: Multilevel caves offer battles with varying ranges of difficulty. If you die, you don't have far to go to get to hell.



of *Magic* as a Warrior, a Mage, or a Thief. Later, when you can afford it, you can hire and train additional characters.

Each character class has its own way of doing things. The Warriors are the toughest physically—the champions who resort to combat because that's what they do best. Plus they get to ride around on big war beasts.

The Mage is not someone you'd trust with a sword, but the sword is not this champion's preferred weapon. Instead, Mages draw on the lore of the ancients to cast spells that can destroy enemies, resurrect the dead, and even change the shape of the land.

Thieves live by their wits. They are crafty and stealthy, always looking for the opportunity to spy, steal, and kidnap. When faced with the threat of combat, they will attack from a distance rather than stand toe to toe in a fight.

As a Lord, you must also choose which Faith to worship and, hence, which race to lead. You can choose from Air, Earth, Fire, Water, Chaos, Order, Life, and Death in single-player games. (The Death faith, it should be noted, is playable only after you've defeated Balkoth.) Each Faith has its own creatures and military units and, like the character classes, its own weaknesses and strengths.



PALM BEACH IT AIN'T: War beasts and heavy armor are the protection you need here. Leave the SPF 30 and beach towels at home.

Enter the Special Edition

I spoke with project lead Chris Beatrice about the *Special Edition*. What most impressed me in our conversation was his devotion not only to *Lords of Magic* but also to its fans. He made it clear that from the beginning the goal of the *Special Edition* was to provide fans with a strategy/RPG/adventure experience that would be different for each player. During initial testing, Beatrice said he and his crew found that “many, many different and entertaining stories were coming out of the people playing the game.

“Each person was pursuing a strategy that was, to him, intuitive and fun, and each was having a very different game experience. Yet, all of these experiences fit very neatly into the realm of Urak; the realm of classic fantasy.” This particular aspect of the *Special Edition* will hook you—you can vary your strategy and have an experience unique only to you.

What to expect

The *Special Edition* gives you Great Temple upgrades (additional build-ings) to advance your cause. You get one upgrade per Faith. For example, there's Life's Shrine of Vitality, which gives you additional

“If you prefer the dark hordes of Death, you can summon the dreaded Lich...if you dare.”





restorative powers and the ability to summon the sacred Phoenix. There's the Holy Spring of the Water Faith (the Holy Spring restores all hit points, movement, and mana for Water Units). And there's the Altar of Sacrifice: Sacrifice an enemy champion on the altar, and mana and experience will be conveyed to the Mage who wields the blade. True to the character of a necromancer, you increase your power by robbing your enemy of its life force through the ritual of sacrifice.

There are now eight "legendary" creatures that can be summoned to do your bidding. These are doled out one creature per Faith, and are invoked at your upgraded Great Temple. If you play the Faith of Order, you'll be able to summon Sir Lancelot. If you prefer the dark hordes of Death, you can summon the dreaded Lich...if you dare. These creatures might give you an edge against the 16 new wandering monsters—Centaur, Orcs, Trolls, Sprites, and Grendel—among them.

The *Special Edition* also offers multilevel caves and dungeons for exploration (meaning you don't have to go back to the overland map every time you finish a combat). The new Lord editor lets you modify your starting character's level and experience points and purchase additional units, spells, artifacts, and buildings. You can also expect new artifacts and spells. And because the *Special Edition* is from Impressions, you can expect it to have an extra arrow in its quiver: the *Legends of Urak Quest Pack* also includes five epic quests.

Quests to conquer

The *Special Edition* offers players the chance to venture forth on



YOUR NEW BEST FRIENDS: When in serious trouble, call upon any of the eight new creatures, such as the Ice Drake, to help you out of a jam.

quests, but not on quests as you usually find them in role-playing games. These quests re-create legends from Urak's mythical past, offering players a very different look at the world of *Lords of Magic*.

Within a quest, players are required to complete various tasks and missions to achieve their final goal, which differs with each quest. As the dark elf necromancer in the Death quest, for example, the player must subjugate and enslave the entire light-elfen race—an event in Urak's past that led to the hatred the two peoples feel for each other today.

In the Earth quest, the player starts as a lowly halfling thief, and must travel across vast expanses

of unknown wildernesses in search of an ancient dragon hoard. As Merlin in the Order scenario, the player must find and protect the boy-king Arthur, then take him and his knights on the quest for the Holy Grail (most people don't know the tales of King Arthur were told in Urak long before they became known to *this* world...).

Lords of Magic: Special Edition is that rarity, the worthy expansion pack with a fresh face that still retains the appeal of the original game. The *Special Edition*, with its expanded features and its unique, legendary quests, is sure to win the praises of *Lords of Magic* die-hards and newcomers alike. **P**



"Most people don't know the tales of King Arthur were told in Urak long before they became known to this world..."

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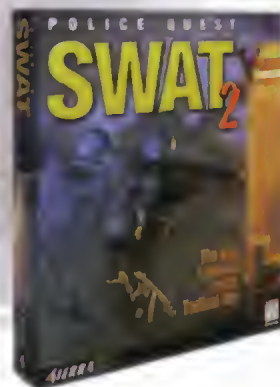
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Get a Grip

Don't Make a Game Out of Picking a Joystick

By Bryan Salois

I still remember when the best joystick in the world was a mushy, single-button, eight-directional stick that was included with the original Atari 2600. Little had changed by the early days of PC gaming, with two-button, analog sticks making up the bulk of available gaming devices. We had a button. We had a stick. We were happy.

Today, though, the "entry level" controller for a serious gamer is an analog stick with four buttons and a HAT switch (a small, eight-directional switch that sits on top of your joystick).

If you're in the market for a PC controller, the following roundup might help you make your decision.

First, some overall tips:

What are your gaming needs? If you're a flight-sim junkie, a digital joystick just isn't going to cut it. If you're into combat or action/arcade games, a \$150 flight stick isn't for you.

Before going joystick-hunting, try listing your 10 favorite games, then think about your ideal controller for those games. (Also figure in how much you're willing to spend!)

Analog or digital? Analog is better for smooth, fluid control; digital is generally better for precision. Flight sims need analog, whereas action-oriented games do better with digital. Digital joysticks don't generally perform well in DOS games, but this should scarcely be a concern anymore.

How many buttons? Should they be programmable? Go for a minimum of four buttons and a HAT switch. It's better if the joystick offers programmable buttons, since it can then be configured to your



CH Gamestick

Are you ambidextrous? If so you'll dig this one. Works great for right- and left-handers.

personal preferences.

Is Force Feedback important? For me, feeling my joystick rattle as I fire a machine gun is quaint, but not important. Additionally, few games support Force Feedback, and Force Feedback controllers are expensive. You'll have to make this call on your own.

Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro

For the gamer who has it all, the stick that has it all. It's comfortable, programmable, solid—and pricey.



The contenders

For each controller I used an early version of Sierra's upcoming *Starsiege* as my test bed. I selected it because I felt it would offer the best combination of action and "simulation" elements that most gamers look for. I rated each controller on the following:

Comfort: A good joystick should have a comfortable grip. The buttons should be easily accessed with minimal hand aerobics.

Features: A low score here doesn't mean the stick is poor—it just doesn't offer programmability or as many extras as a stick with a higher rating.

Responsiveness: This is the general "feel" of the joystick.

Durability: How well the controller seems like it will hold up under heavy use and abuse.

Thrustmaster Top Gun Joystick + Attack Throttle

Thrustmaster's Top Gun Joystick is an update of their classic FCS-16 joystick, which admittedly is one of my old favorites. One thing I really like about this stick is that it's small enough to fit just about any hand size comfortably. Additionally, this joystick has long been an "industry standard" of sorts, and is well-supported in DOS and Windows 95. This controller is perfect for a gamer with modest needs who appreciates simplicity and flexibility. Add to that great durability, and you've got a winner. My only (minor) pet peeve with the Top Gun is the stiff-feeling buttons.

The Attack Throttle companion controller is also a good, simple throttle, consisting of four buttons and a three-position switch. For those who don't need the ultra-programmability (and complexity) of Suncom's offering, this is the throttle for you. Paired with the Top Gun Joystick, you get eight programmable buttons, a HAT switch, and a thumb switch, all easily programmed via Thrustmaster's Windows interface. The only real

downsides to the Attack Throttle: It's not very ergonomic, it's light (might slide a bit), and it feels a little loose, making fine control more difficult.

www.thrustmaster.com

CH Gamestick

The CH Gamestick is a standard analog joystick with four buttons. It's comfortable, offers smooth control, and has the distinction of being the only controller in this review that is equally comfortable for right- or left-handers.

The Gamestick is programmable; unfortunately, the software interface is unintuitive. The controller also has too little resistance, creating a tendency to over-control. However, for a modest price, the CH Gamestick is a good all-around "meat and potatoes" joystick that won't break you, but offers enough features to satisfy modest gamers. (The more advanced Gamestick 14 includes additional buttons, a HAT, a throttle, and two built-in directional pads.)

www.chproducts.com

Act Labs PowerAmp Hyperprogrammable 10-in-1

The PowerAmp is essentially a "keyboard on a stick." The PowerAmp connects to your keyboard port instead of a gameport, and your keyboard connects to the joystick. What this does is let you program virtually any key or series of keys to one of 14 buttons or eight directions on your joystick.

This type of controller requires no calibration in DOS or Windows, plus it's

easily programmed without a software interface. Flip a switch, hit a key on the keyboard, hit a joystick button, and the button is now programmed to that key. You can call up one of four separate configurations by flipping a switch.

If you're a die-hard flight-sim fan or if you play games in which smooth, analog control is best, pass on the PowerAmp. Since it uses keyboard input, it's 100 percent digital and doesn't suit flying/driving games well. I did, however, use the PowerAmp for *Starsiege*'s keyboard commands with modest success, though I sometimes found myself



Act Labs PowerAmp

If you're a keyboard commando or an arcade-game junkie, this is the stick for you.



Quickshot Sky Commander

Dual controls for split personalities? No, this joystick-and-throttle combination offers the advantage of a single joystick connection (and far fewer cables).



Suncom Strike Fighter Joystick + Throttle

This duo will make any desktop look like the cockpit of an F-16. Warning: Hard-core flight-sim junkies only!

taking my hand off the joystick to hit one of the large, arcade-size buttons. Another downside is that the PowerAmp clicks loudly like a keyboard, making for a noisy experience. If you're a keyboard commander or an arcade-game junkie, this is the stick for you.

www.actlob.com

Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro

Microsoft's successful Sidewinder line of controllers has produced yet another champ. While the price is

steep, the Sidewinder is comfortable, ergonomic, and solidly constructed. This controller has it all: eight programmable buttons, a HAT switch, a throttle, right/left twisting action, and a "Shift" button to effectively double the number of programmable button functions. The Sidewinder's software is intuitive and easy to use, so programming the buttons for your favorite game should be a snap.

The only major disadvantage to this controller is the high price. From an ergonomic standpoint, the Shift button seems a tad far from the other buttons, so this could be a problem for smaller hands. If you're interested in this stick but not the Force Feedback, the Sidewinder Precision Pro is the same stick minus the higher price and Force Feedback. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend either if you can afford one.

www.microsoft.com/Sidewinder

Logitech Wingman Force Feedback

Similar to Microsoft's Sidewinder, the Logitech Wingman offers a throttle, a HAT switch, and eight buttons. On top of that, it has a

dual connector that allows you to connect to a USB (Universal Serial Bus) or a serial port, so if you have other controllers you'll still have your joystick port free.

While the Logitech is sturdy and stable, it does consume more desktop space than any other controller in this review. Although I don't care for the small, rubbery buttons used on the stick itself, I still found it to be comfortable and responsive. I also like the base buttons and the large throttle, though the HAT could be a tad less tall and pointy.

The Wingman does not offer the programmability and flexibility of the Sidewinder Force Feedback, but bear in mind this is a pre-production model with early drivers—the final product might address some of these concerns. I suspect it will be priced within range of the Sidewinder. In that case, if you're in this price range, I'd still recommend the Sidewinder.

www.logitech.com

Quickshot Sky Commander

This is actually a dual controller: a joystick for the right hand and a throttle for the other. The unit is

Controller	Price	Comfort	Features	Response	Durability	Best Point(s)	Worst Point(s)
Thrustmaster Attack Throttle + Top Gun Joystick	\$39.99 Controller \$49.99 Throttle	★★★ Controller ★★★ Throttle	★★ Controller ★★★ Throttle	★★★	★★★	Lots of features without a lot of complexity.	Stiff buttons. Throttle is not very ergonomic.
CH Gamestick	\$35.00	★★★	★★	★★★	★★	Good for right- or left-handers. Inexpensive.	Light construction. No HAT switch.
Act Labs PowerAmp 10-In 1	\$39.95	★★	★★★	★★	★★	Ultra-programmable & easy to program.	Only good for arcade or keyboard-intensive games. Noisy.
Quickshot Sky Commander	\$79.95	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★	Solid feel, low cost.	Poor design.
MS Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro	\$139.95	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	Comfortable, solid feel. Easily configured.	Expensive.
Logitech Wingman Force Feedback	\$150.00	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	USB support. Uses serial port instead of game port.	Expensive. Rubber buttons. Too bulky.
Suncom Strike Fighter + Throttle	\$29.99 Controller \$99.99 Throttle	★★★ Controller ★★★ Throttle	★★ Controller ★★★ Throttle	★★★	★★★	Good all-around stick. Throttle adds a lot of features.	Too big. Could use better software/programming interface
★ = Poor ★★ = Average/Fair ★★★ = Good ★★★★ = Excellent							

Logitech Wingman Force Feedback

You can connect this one to a USB or a serial port and still keep your joystick port free. Eats up desk space.



a single piece but can be spaced apart via an adjustable base. It's billed as a joystick for the flight-sim enthusiast, and in that role it functions quite well. It features a throttle, a HAT, and 10 programmable buttons. While not ideal for *Starsiege* (a mouse is best for targeting), it's decent for flight sims or space-combat games.

The Sky Commander is solidly constructed. Ergonomically, the Sky Commander is comfortable and features a nice grip, but it suffers from one glaring flaw: The HAT switch is located directly between two buttons on the top of the controller. Combined with a T-shaped top, this makes it very difficult to get your thumb up, over the HAT, and on to your second button. I graded this controller down for comfort due to these thumb-aerobics.

Design-wise, it offers the advantage of a single joystick connection, as opposed to similar products from other companies (see Suncom's entry below). Typically, you must connect one joystick to the computer and the throttle controller to the joystick...and sometimes to the keyboard as well. The Sky Commander does it all in one easy connection. While this keeps the area free of excess cables, it also limits the ways in which you can

position the throttle and joystick, costing it in the comfort area again.

The Sky Commander is programmable and hosts enough features to satisfy fans of flight sims and action games alike.

www.quickshot.com

Suncom Strike Fighter Joystick + Throttle

Suncom's flight controller and throttle will make any desktop look like the cockpit of a fighter jet. The joystick connects to the throttle,

which in turn connects to the joystick port and your keyboard port. Your keyboard connects to the throttle, so it can be programmed to perform in place of keyboard commands.

Only fighter/flight-sim junkies should consider these beasts together. While the joystick is a fairly standard four-button with a HAT, the throttle actually consists of two distinct throttles and more buttons, switches, and gizmos than you can shake a (joy)stick at. These are all programmable. The throttle isn't difficult to program, but instructions are sparse. If your gaming needs don't demand this level of control, consider purchasing just the joystick.

This is another joystick that seems a bit oversized, meaning I had to stretch a bit to reach the buttons and HAT switch. Otherwise, both controllers are fairly comfortable and durable. The base could be heavier, but Suncom does include suction-cup feet for both controllers. Overall responsiveness is smooth and clean with just the right amount of resistance.

www.suncominc.com

Thrustmaster Attack Throttle & Top Gun Joystick

Simple, flexible, durable, and not too pricey, these two make a great combo. One drawback: The buttons are on the stiff side.



FLY FREESTYLE WITH MICROSOFT



Microsoft's upcoming Sidewinder Freestyle Pro gamepad adds a whole new dimension to controllers. In addition to having a standard digital gamepad, throttle, eight buttons, and a Shift button (a total of 16 programmable button functions), the Freestyle also offers motion-sensitive response. Tilting the controller forward or back, left or right will cause movement in that direction. And if you don't want to use the motion-sensor feature, the press of a button will turn it off so you can just use the gamepad.

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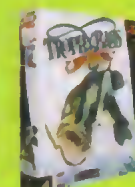
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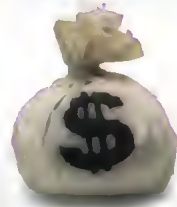
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When we debuted *The i-Spy* last issue, our reporters' mission was to dig through the rumors surrounding games that were many months away from completion. This issue, we've turned our elite investigative team loose on games that, though they'll be available by Christmas, are in danger of getting lost in the media

machine. That's a shame, because the games you'll find in this section deserve their time in the spotlight, too. Once again *The i-Spy* sleuths have sifted through dumpsters, stolen emails, and subpoenaed testimony from interns to bring back the news. It really is amazing what some people will do for an *InterAction* T-shirt!

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

Duffers in Paradise

www.sierrasports.com

By John Petrick

The revved-up True-Swing™ will now allow for vertical and horizontal hitting as well as greater swing control.

Anyone who played *Front Page Sports: Golf Pro '98* knew they were playing a golf simulation accurate enough to include all the joy (and all the aggravation) of real golf. The *FPS: Golf* series led the pack with its True-Swing™ mechanics and painstakingly-rendered courses.

This summer Sierra Sports formed an alliance with the Professional Golfers Association of America, resulting in a new name for our new game: *PGA Championship Golf: 1999 Edition*. Now, among the seven courses included in *PGA Championship Golf*, you'll find the Sahalee Country Club of Redmond, Washington, site of the 80th PGA Championship, and Royal Birkdale, scene of the 1998 British Open.

Beyond the name change

OK, so they changed the name. So no golf game has changed its name before? No, but no golf game has offered features like these before. Players will be able to create their onscreen golfer in never-before-attempted detail: clothing, hats, shoes, facial hair, and even gender. (Everything except the size of the ominous Milwaukee Tumor—beer gut, to you civilians.)

The male and female figures



NO PRESSURE: You can position Drive, Approach, Green, and Reverse Approach cameras to record your triumphs for posterity.

come to life thanks to 400 new motion-captured animations of real golfers. You'll see your golfer react in a variety of ways depending on how well, or poorly, your game is going. And you'll be able to adjust a golfer's stance for those tough shots out of the trees and from the

sides of hills.

Also new to *PGA Championship Golf* is the inclusion of ReadyPlay, which lets you play at your own pace. No more suffering through everyone else's shots (though you can still watch if you like to heckle). Also included will be the ability to

position a camera on other players so you can keep an eye on them as they play (and make sure they're keeping score properly).

The revved-up True-Swing™ will now allow for vertical and horizontal hitting as well as greater swing control. It used to be that you could just "grip it and rip it," throwing caution to the wind faster than you could yell "fore." *PGA Championship Golf's* inclusion of an Impact Point will mean more accurate and exacting swings, allowing you to hit the sweet spot of the ball, shank it, or toe it...all determined by how well you return the mouse to the position it started in.

Build your own Sahalee

PGA Championship Golf will enable you to craft custom golf courses from scratch using the brand-spanking-new Golf Course Architect. The Course Architect will be a dream come true for those arm-chair duffers who think they have what it takes to design the most treacherous courses known to mankind.

The Course Architect will be broken into two views: the Course View and Working View. The Course View is an overhead, 2D view of the course layout. The Working View is a 3D-rendered view that actually lets you see your masterpiece in progress.

Getting started is a simple matter of dragging and dropping objects into your Working Area. With just a few clicks, you can raise and lower selected areas faster than any fancy-pants team of groundskeepers. Once you have your basic course laid out, you can apply different textures to it, such as grass, sand, and water. Adding man-made objects is as easy as a four-inch putt on a calm day.

Cameras and wizards

With the terrain molded to your liking, you're ready to place various cameras around the hole for viewing replays. These include a Drive, an Approach, a Green, and a



Reverse Drive. The positioning of the cameras—completely up to you, the god-like course creator—should render some exhilarating replays of you in your moment of triumph.

(During the course-creation process you'll have only one camera working for you—the Camera View—but you can position and point it as you like: drag it up beside a bunker and look at a grain of sand, or pull it back and look across the entire hole. You can drop trees and objects and textures onto this view from the Library View, then zoom waaay in and position things as closely as one inch.)

Assisting you in your course creation will be a series of wizards, which will walk you through the entire process. Using the New Course wizard, you can draw the shape of the hole and create the fairway, green, fringe, and rough to fit the hole shape. (This wizard's also a number-cruncher: It generates yardage and even handicaps the holes.) Then there's the Tree wizard, which lets you populate a selected area with trees of various sizes, types, and shapes. (The Tree wizard also handles other objects found in nature, such as rocks,



WEB LINKS: Design courses that would give the pros headaches and upload them for your friends and enemies to play on.

shrubs, and packs of ravenous squirrels.)

Cyber heaven

Once you have your course built and ready for play, you can distribute it across the Internet for your friends and enemies (those pesky bastards at the "other" golf club) to enjoy. Internet play for *PGA Championship Golf* is supported by the Sierra Sports Golf Association on WON (www.won.net). The SGA holds tournaments, offers tips, tracks statistics, and provides enough golf-related reading to keep any duffer happy in paradise.

RED BARON 3D

A Free Ride to Flight-Sim Heaven

www.redbaron3d.com

By Rob Bakie

You *Red Baron* fans are a lucky bunch. First, because you get to play *Red Baron*, of course. Second, because Dynamix is releasing *Red Baron 3D* as a free "3D graphic acceleration file" for *Red Baron II*. Now you can fly the bullet-torn skies of WWI Europe in three dimensions.

The new file (available at www.sierra.com/titles/rb2) will support all cards that use the 3Dfx chipset, including Voodoo and Voodoo II. Among the new visual features you'll find are such enhanced atmospheric effects as fog, haze, and sun glare. You'll notice new texturing for cockpits and gunfire as well as new special effects like transparent smoke trails and concussion rings around explosions. When you find yourself in the heat and excitement of a low-level dogfight, you'll know you're at treetop level because the treetops will suddenly appear.

No fear of flying

"Even though we're calling it a 'graphic acceleration file,' there are a lot of other changes," explains

team director Tucker Hatfield. "The flight model has been greatly enhanced and now includes features like engine torque and gyroscopic effects, more realistic handling of engine power and RPMs, more accurate speed and climb rates, and a generally improved feel of flying."

The first new feature you'll see is flight-mode difficulty, which has been divided into three levels: Authentic, Intermediate, and Easy. "There are also a lot of bug fixes and improvements in the way the AI pilots fly their aircraft," says Hatfield. The AI pilots are much smarter now. They're less likely to fly into the ground or chase planes that are already doomed. Your planes are made of wood, let's all give thanks that the wingmen aren't!

The damage model has been extensively reworked as well. Engine damage isn't likely to take you out of the action as quickly now; it's possible to limp that plane back to your airbase. In Authentic



PULL UP, PULL UP!: New ground texturing means more visual clues when your altitude nears zero.

flight mode, damage can affect drag—that shredded wing could put a real crimp in your flying style.

Beefing up multiplayer

Red Baron fans can soon expect the roll-out of an entirely new multiplayer system. Unlike the current one, it'll be a join-in-progress system that will support up to a *minimum* of 20 players. The new scoring system will enable players to compete against each other and track their progress, much like a ladder system. You'll be able to play on WON as always (some nifty enhancements are in the works), but look for the free distribution of server software as well so that players can start their own "rogue" servers.



IN THE ERA BEFORE RADAR: You must cope with new atmospheric effects, including fog, haze, and sun glare.



PRO PILOT '99

**First
in Flight**

www.sierra.com/propilot

By Steven Bryan Bieler

Dynamix has already given armchair pilots a flight path into the past with *Red Baron*, their award-winning World War I air-combat simulation. Last year Dynamix offered fans of modern aircraft the experience of flight with *Pro Pilot*. Now the flight-sim powerhouse has revved up *Pro Pilot* to create *Pro Pilot '99*. Once again, you can fly the contemporary skies in a selection of the most popular planes, without the

Every switch, knob, lever, and button is fully operational. Every gauge has a story to tell (and you'd better pay attention!).

expense, without the risks, and—unlike *Red Baron*—without somebody trying to shoot you full of holes.

One of the primary goals of *Pro Pilot* has been to show you how to fly, even if you've never had a lesson and have trouble with parallel parking. The original *Pro Pilot* came with a series of tutorials and training videos on every aspect of flying. *Pro Pilot '99* takes this process a step further. For the first time, the National Association of Flight Instructors has gotten involved in the making of a flight sim. NAFL is working with



IS THAT MY HOUSE DOWN THERE?: That's a model of North America beneath your wings, not a random assemblage of polygons.

the *Pro Pilot '99* development team to insure the accuracy and thoroughness of all training materials. Dynamix and NAFL are also putting together a Pop-up Operator's Handbook that can be accessed at any time in your flight, from the first spin of the propeller to that welcome touchdown on your home field.

"*Pro Pilot* aims at providing a realistic flight simulation to assist beginning pilots in their ambition to become professionals," explains lead designer Mark Pechnick. "Also, we are aiming to create products that help experienced pilots become more proficient in general—hence the name *Pro Pilot*. We wanted to give users the experience of flight from this perspective."

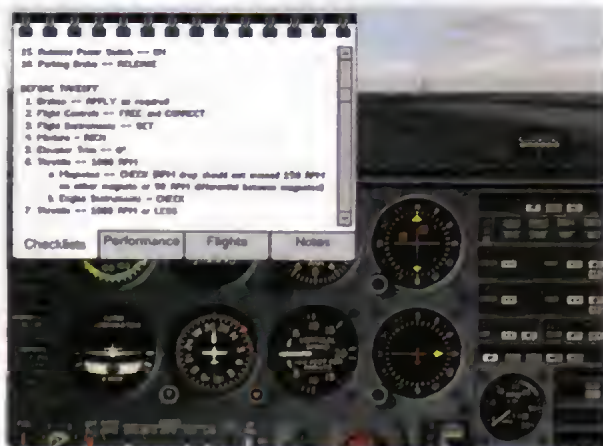
Those switches ain't for show!

The many new features in *Pro Pilot '99* include 3D graphic acceleration, ground texturing, special atmospheric effects (sun glare, cloud-layering), more movable control surfaces, and a new plane to fly: the Cessna 172R joins the stable of five aircraft from the original *Pro Pilot*. Pilots will soar above

realistic representations of North America and Western Europe, and will arrive at and depart from more than 3,500 airports. You'll fly over 35 cities with recognizable architectural features. The aircraft engine sounds have been recorded from their real-life counterparts. There's even a "How to Fly" manual in each box.

Just as important, though, are the features that continue on in *Pro Pilot '99*—like the instrument panels of each aircraft. Every switch, knob, lever, and button is fully operational. Every gauge has a story to tell (and you'd better pay attention!). You'll be able to plot your course from point A to point B using the pioneering Flight Planning Wizard, now with automatic route generation. You'll check your headings using navigational aids (Non-Directional Beacons, VORs, additional airport frequencies) and the Global Positioning System.

As Pechnick sums it up, "We give both aspiring pilots as well as armchair pilots an intense, personalized, realistic flying experience from the safety of home." At just a fraction of the cost—and without bullet holes!



ASK THE PROS: The NAFL helped Dynamix produce a Pop-up Operator's Handbook (pictured). Now you can get professional advice on your flying from takeoff to landing.

NASCAR® RACING 1999

The Top-Selling Racing Sim Laps the Field Again

www.sierra.com/nascar

By Jeff Kitts

Getcher motors runnin', NASCAR fans, because Sierra Sports and Papyrus are gearing up to release the next, hot-rodded version of their best-selling *NASCAR* series. This update of the great American stock-car racing game will feature high-speed, bumper-to-bumper racing in the three most popular NASCAR series in one box, including the NASCAR Winston Cup series, the NASCAR Grand National series, and the all-new, first-time-anybody's-ever-done-this NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series division, complete with actual Truck Series drivers and tracks.

Fans who already own *NASCAR RACING 2* and the *Grand National Series Expansion Pack* will be jazzed by the graphical facelift given to the game by Papyrus, Sierra's motor-sports development division. With enhancement for 3Dfx hardware acceleration and numerous visual tweakings, the game promises to be among the most realistic-looking racing sims on the market today. And the

native Windows 95 support guarantees compatibility with most computer systems.

NASCAR Racing 1999 Edition will feature the most popular drivers from all three racing divisions, including Winston Cup superstars Dale Earnhardt, Mark Martin, and Rusty Wallace, with their updated 1998 season paint schemes and sponsors. All the Winston Cup tracks from

NASCAR RACING 2 (reconfigured to reflect all recent changes in track geometry) and the Grand National updates will also be included, as well as a bevy of new tracks exclusive to the Craftsman Truck Series.



BEAUTY IS MORE THAN SKIN DEEP: The improvements to *NASCAR 2* include 3Dfx support and updated and reconfigured tracks.

The differences in downforce and handling will make the Craftsman Truck Series an entirely new computer racing experience.

Trucks: The Final Frontier

As this is Papyrus' maiden voyage into truck racing, the company started from scratch as far as researching the aerodynamics and physics of the trucks compared to Winston Cup and Grand National cars.

The differences in downforce and handling of these vehicles will make the Truck Series option in *NASCAR RACING 1999 Edition* an entirely new computer racing experience for gamers. Players will

also have to get used to the different rules used in the Craftsman Truck Series, among them the "intermission" that comes at the midway point of each race. It's here the race is red-flagged for five minutes, giving each team equal opportunity to pit and make changes to their ride.

With these and the other enhancements, as well as the addition of the Craftsman Truck Series division, *NASCAR Racing 1999 Edition* looks to be the racing sim to beat this season.

VIPER RACING

Ride the Snake

By Jeff Kitts

www.sierrasports.com

Since its introduction in 1992, the Dodge Viper has upheld its reputation as the fastest American production car available. And while one wouldn't expect anything less after forking over \$73,000 to have one shipped to your doorstep, the Viper GTS Coupe is nonetheless a sports car for the ages. Its 7,990 cc

engine can produce upwards of 450 horsepower and go from zero to 100 in a mere 8.8 seconds. A mean machine, no doubt—but it sure sounds like a fun way to reach that, ahem, final destination. Better yet, with Sierra On-Line's upcoming *Viper Racing* sports-car simulation for the PC, deskchair drivers will finally be able to take command of a virtual Viper and marvel at its unprecedented

performance abilities—with no threat of bodily harm.

Currently being developed by MGI in conjunction with Papyrus



(the Sierra motor-sports development team responsible for such groundbreaking racing efforts as *NASCAR Racing* and *Grand Prix Legends*), *Viper Racing* promises to be a revolutionary achievement in sports-car racing simulations. Lead pro-

grammer Richard Garcia, one of the founders of Papyrus who left the security of a powerhouse development team to form MGI, is understandably thrilled with the prospect of finally seeing the fruits of his labor after two years of development.

"When we left Papyrus, we couldn't take any of the code base with us from any of the products we had previously worked on, so we had to start from scratch with *Viper Racing*," says Garcia. "We wanted a full-3D, hyper-realistic racing simulation, but we started with nothing—so it's been a lot of work."

"We didn't want to do another *Need for Speed* or *Test Drive: Off-Road*, which are really arcade games," he says. "Our intention was to take a serious approach to realistic sports-car racing, yet still



WHAT \$73,000 WILL BUY YOU: From stock Vipers to hot-rodded monsters, you'll drive cars that misbehave like the real thing.

make the game accessible to a wide audience."

Yes it is rocket science

For MGI, the only road to realism ran through the mountains of research they conducted—from uncovering rare performance data for racing tires to attending auto-racing school. Get the math right, get the feel right, get the tracks and tires right, and, as Garcia says, "make sure it all works together."

Viper Racing will feature eight different closed tracks (six road courses, one tri-oval, and one oval), different classes of Dodge Vipers (from stock Vipers to hot-rodded 650-horsepower behemoths), and a complete garage area where drivers can tweak nearly all aspects of their car's performance and handling. The game will support all major brands of Direct 3D hardware acceleration.



ROAD TO REALISM: Vipers collide in the shot above. "Our intention was to take a serious approach to realistic sports-car racing, yet still make the game accessible," says designer Richard Garcia.

3D ULTRA NASCAR® PINBALL

Where the Pinball Meets the Road

www.sierra.com/pinball4

By Jeff Gilbert

When you think about it, taking the full-throttle adrenaline of NASCAR racing and turning it into a 3D pinball game seems like a match made in pit-stop heaven: smashing into bumpers...ricocheting off walls...slamming into rails...traveling at the speed of sounds (the cars, the fans, your neighbors begging you to shut up or give them a turn). *3D Ultra NASCAR Pinball* from Sierra Attractions captures the break-neck pulse of NASCAR racing with smoking, skidding tires and over-revved engines. And just like NASCAR, you gotta have a lot of guts to be in this game.

You play on three tables—the *Garage*, where you'll tune up one of four cars; the *Pits*, where you'll replace worn tires and fuel your mad machine; and the *Speedway*, where you can put your reflexes to the metal and practice your victory-lap wave. You can race as one of four NASCAR drivers—Dale Earnhardt, Bill Elliott, and the Labonte brothers, Terry and

Bobby—and each table sports your driver's logos.

As with NASCAR racing, you'll need to keep your car in peak performance in order to finish. You can adjust your vehicle by skillfully hitting the right sequence of bumpers, drop targets, ramps, and animations: weight distribution, tire pressure, camber, shocks, spoiler angle, suspension. Making it to the

Speedway, you'll encounter such hazards as yellow flags, loose tires, and go-for-broke drivers zinging across the track like homebound commuters. The

You'll encounter such hazards as oil slicks, loose tires, and out-of-control drivers zinging across the track like homebound commuters.



TABLE-HOPPING: You can tune your mad machine in the *Garage* (top), then practice your victory lap on the *Speedway* (above).

only things missing are the smells of spilled fuel and overcooked hot dogs.

Oil cans and cheering fans

In a bid to make the game as NASCAR-accurate as possible, Dynamix, the clever creators of the top-selling *3D Ultra Pinball* series, included an Announcer ("Gentlemen...start your engines!"), a Crew Chief ("Hey, take it easy; it's only pinball!"), and a motion-capture pit crew—a first for a pinball game—jumping over the pitwall to service your car. There are black flags, yellow flags,

green flags, pit stops, qualifying rounds, oil cans...and cheering fans. If you can steer clear, there are bonus rounds and special targets (no, not your pit crew), and *Multi-Ball*, the most feared and anticipated feature of any pinball game.

Dynamix has built on their breakthrough 3D-pinball engine to give *3D Ultra NASCAR Pinball* ultra-refined ball physics. The tables are larger and brighter, allowing an uncluttered view, and the legendary Dynamix graphics—the hallmark of their entire pinball line—make *3D Ultra NASCAR Pinball* a checkered-flag winner.

HOMEWORLD

You Can Go Home Again

www.sierra.com/homeworld

By Frank Hollywood

I'm a skeptic. I don't believe what I see on TV. I don't believe what I read in the papers. And, naturally, I never believe the first screens shots I see of any game—let alone all the pie-in-the-sky promises made about how revolutionary said game is going to be.

Seeing the *Homeworld* story in the last issue of *InterAction* was no exception. The screens looked

pretty incredible—surely they couldn't be shots of actual gameplay. But, alas, the captions said they were. Maybe, I thought.

Certainly the story line (being banished from your planet, and then embarking on a somewhat vengeful trip to reclaim your home) was interesting enough. But what's the game about? How does it play? Will it be fun?

That's the stuff that sways the skeptic. And, having played an early version of the game, I was surprised to find that *Homeworld* has swayed this skeptic.

Homeworld allows us to swirl the camera around freely, zooming in on the nose of a frigate before panning out to find its position in the galaxy.



BLIND-SIDED!: Instead of only protecting and attacking from side to side, in *Homeworld* you'll maneuver and fight in three dimensions.

The 3D departure

For years, we've enjoyed the fast-paced—almost action-like—nature of real-time strategy games such as *WorCroft*. Take those basic elements of play and you have the crude beginnings of this game—there's harvesting, researching, ship construction and management, etc.

But *Homeworld* departs from its distant relatives in unbound 3D space. Instead of only protecting and attacking from side to side, you must now take altitude into consideration—which opens up a whole new realm of potential strategies. At first, this seems like it might be a prescription for a control/interface nightmare. And handled differently, it certainly could be. But the team developing *Homeworld* at Relic Entertainment in Vancouver, B.C., is made up of gamers, and they understand that a game must be accessible to be fun.

They've designed a flexible interface that allows you to command your space armada via right-mouse clicks, via the traditional left-mouse-plus-keyboard command structure, or via a combination of

both. In addition, a variety of 3D maps and tactical overlays are provided so that you can always determine which way is up.

Cameras unlimited

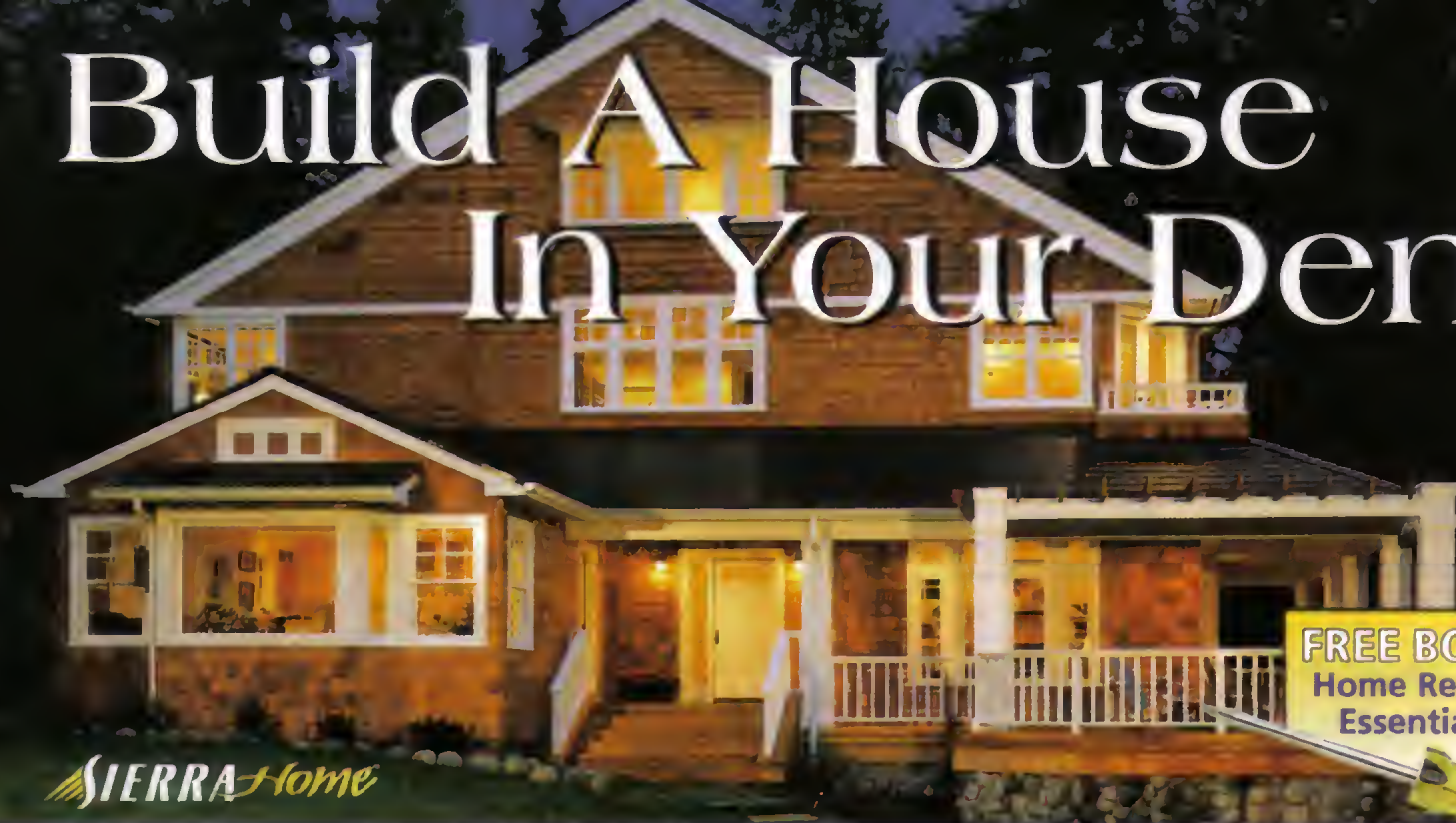
Another cool advancement in *Homeworld*—that also draws from its 3D space—is the unique use of the camera. In some recent action, sports, and space-combat games, developers offered us free control of the camera and a selection of prepositioned viewpoints. But since every prior strategy game has been 2D, the camera movement has been limited to an isometric view. *Homeworld's* 3D universe allows us the opportunity to swirl the camera around freely, zooming in on the nose of a frigate before panning all the way out to find its position in the galaxy.

Some recent strategy games have introduced cool 3D units and other game assets, but *Homeworld's* introduction of unbound 3D space is a truly profound innovation—one that might even have the potential to change the way we play games (strategy games, at least).



NO FREE PASSES: On your journey to your ancestral home you'll meet alien races that don't look kindly on trespassers.

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Kitchen Conqueror

BY J.R. JENKINS

It's the end of another workday. I am tired, hungry, and my wife will be home from her job in 45 minutes. Guess who's supposed to cook dinner tonight? You guessed it—your intrepid reporter must don a chef's hat and create a dinner for two that is healthy and delicious. We haven't been to the market in a few days, so when I open the fridge and cupboard I find a collection of gastronomic odds and ends that have as much in common as jalapeño peppers and pancakes. "What can I make with this?" I wonder aloud.

MasterCook Deluxe 5.0 creates recipes from your leftovers, easily imports other recipes and entire cookbooks, and even lets you add a picture of Grandma to her pie recipe

Above the cupboard sits our extensive collection of cookbooks and countless food magazines. I know that in there, somewhere, is the answer to my puzzle. But searching through indexes and chapters to find that perfect meal could take hours!

Above the cupboard sits our extensive collection of cookbooks and countless food magazines. I know that in there, somewhere, is the answer to my puzzle. But searching through indexes and chapters to find that perfect meal could take hours!

Who says men can't cope?

Fortunately, I have a solution. I start preheating the oven, head for our computer, and fire up *MasterCook Deluxe 5.0*. I click on the cookbook category and, again, I am faced with 10 cookbook covers. But with a click of the ingeniously named "What Can I Make?" button, *MasterCook* rifles through the entire collection in 5 seconds and comes up with 25 recipes that can be made with the contents of my kitchen. All of them look good, especially Chicken Dijon with Rosemary Roasted Potatoes, prep time 10 minutes, cooking time 40 minutes. Bingo! I print the recipe, and then I print out a menu

card in a beautiful script to grace my wife's setting. I head to the kitchen, my oven hot and my job already half-completed.

Faced with the quickly changing world of the Internet and its ever-growing community of food fans, the *MasterCook* team has created an entirely new program that's



THE MASTER CHEFS BOOKSHELF: Graham Kerr, Sheila Lukins, Jenny Craig and you!

MasterCook Deluxe 5.0

"Fast, sleek, and versatile.... A well-balanced digital dish that should please the palate of Mac gourmets."

— MACUSER

simple enough for a beginner to use with no hassles. It has a familiar "web browser" look, and with just a few clicks you can search the online version of the manual for helpful tips and advice.

For the legion of current *MasterCook* users, this program will blow your oven-mitts off. Drag and drop recipes from the web into your


recipes and, second, the way it lets you access and search your cookbooks. This is the yin and yang of cooking software.

MasterCook has reached a Zen-like perfection in this area. Users

in the lasagna directions, just a double-click away from being opened. Also, instructional pictures and video clips can be embedded in the recipes! Filleting a fish sounds difficult, but with *MasterCook*'s video demonstration ready to be played, the mystery is swept away.

Immortalizing the world's greatest chefs

Family secrets and traditions can be captured in amazing ways. Does Grandma make an award-winning pie crust? With a camera and a scanner you can include photos of the master-at-work (Grandma) in the pie recipe! There is no limit to the creative ways you can save recipes.

Of course, the reason we save recipes is to use them. You can create meal plans for a single day, a week, a month, or a year that will generate shopping lists and track the contents of your pantry. This allows you to search with the "What Can I Make?" button. Are you getting the idea that this program does it all? The only thing it won't do is the actual cooking! *MasterCook* is a cookbook manager, recipe secretary, and cooking instructor all in one. How many computer programs can boast that? PC used to mean "personal computer." After a week with *MasterCook Deluxe 5.0*, I'm beginning to think it means "personal chef"! 



"The Import Assistant is the answer to any recipe collector's dreams, making the time-consuming process of adding recipes from different sources as easy as cracking an egg."

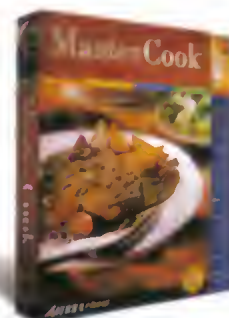
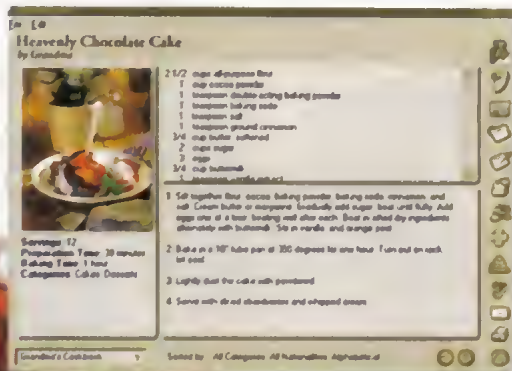
asked for an easier way to import recipes into their cookbooks and the *MasterCook* team delivered. The Import Assistant is the answer to any recipe collector's dreams, making the time-consuming process of adding recipes from different sources as easy as cracking an egg. Gone are the days of saving recipes in text files and then reformatting them. This program allows you to drag-and-drop recipes from Word files, e-mail attachments, web pages, and more—all directly into your cookbook.

The Import Assistant—Don't enter the kitchen without it

The two most important aspects of any cooking software are, first, the way it saves and organizes your

cookbooks; customize the look and layout of your cookbooks, from the font of the recipe to the design of the cover; and enjoy the increased number of right-click options that now grace the program. And, of course, users of *MasterCook 3.0* and *4.0* will have no problem moving their existing cookbooks into this program.

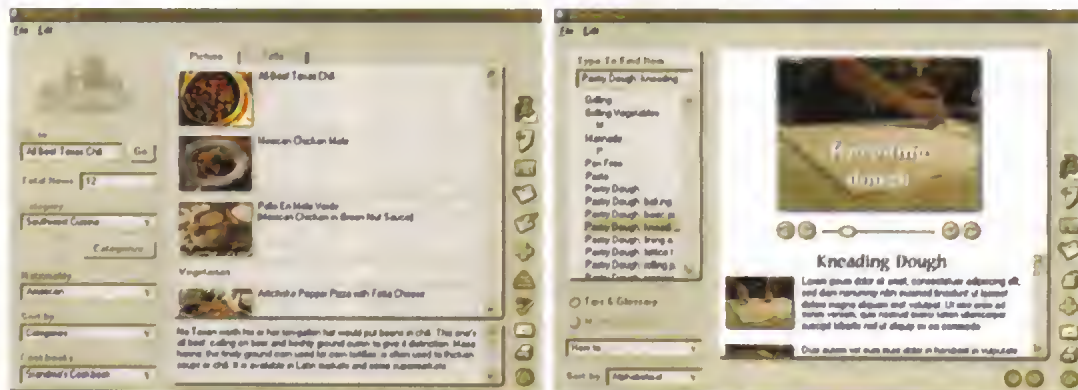
Features abound in this new cookbook format. Does your lasagna begin and end with your time-honored tomato sauce? Well, that sauce recipe can be embedded



MASTERCOOK DELUXE 5.0

www.sierra.com/mastercook

Developer	Sierra Home
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*"...the highest Family Tested score yet for a publishing program...
marrying power and ease of use with true creative flair."*

- FAMILY PC

settings and goody-bags. A couple more clicks and I knew this would be the birthday party of my niece's dreams, complete with a cowgirl-ballerina theme.

The program boasts a large number of graphics that I could place on my designs. Officially, *Print Artist* lists some 150,000 graphics and 29,000 photos in its four-CD package. This large a selection may seem overwhelming, but, with the help of the Graphics Grabber, jumping through all those choices is effortless. Think of the Graphics Grabber as the graphics librarian, seamlessly—and quickly—searching through numerous clip-art files. You can search through the files by keywords or categories, and see a preview of each graphic before committing to work with it.

I started out with the banner, and made it my central design. Using “ballerina” as a keyword, I found six graphics to work with. Sadly, none of the ballerinas were pirouetting in cowboy boots. I would have to get creative. I added the ballerina to my banner, and then searched for “boots.” Six items appeared, including two pairs of cowboy boots. One pair wouldn’t work, but the other was close. The

boots didn't fit the color scheme (they were brown and yellow with a green background), and they faced the wrong direction—but they had definite party potential. I added them to the design, resized them, and used a simple overlay effect so they looked like they were on the ballerina's feet.

Eat your heart out, Steven Spielberg

I went to the Effect menu and chose "Flipped," and *voilo*, the boots were now facing the right way. I went to the Color menu and changed it from the Preset Color to Magenta (that's pink, guys) and clicked "OK." The results were amazing. I now had a ballerina in pink cowboy boots! It took me all of five minutes.

Using this image as my centerpiece, I easily added additional ballerinas dancing on horses. I personalized the text so that it showed



BEYOND BIRTHDAY CARDS: Turn cards into coloring books to keep those kids quiet!



my niece's name and age. The banner looked great. I had a feeling my niece was going to love this.

Next, I made some party hats with the same theme. I made one with a green background and one with a pink background. I printed six of each, figuring the kids could pick the ones they preferred. Last, I worked on the much-celebrated and all-important goody-bag. This, too, was a breeze. Since I had conceived my basic design, I found it easy to add it to each bag by using the Copy and Paste commands. It took me another 10 minutes to design a goody-bag that had all the right elements. I even picked up a trick from the manual that showed

"A couple more clicks and I knew this would be the birthday party of my niece's dreams."



LET THE GRAPHICS GRABBER DO THE WALKING: Your librarian-in-a-box finds the images you want quickly and easily.



how you could create a coloring-book page on any design. I left one side of each goody-bag void of color so the kids could customize their bags with crayons.

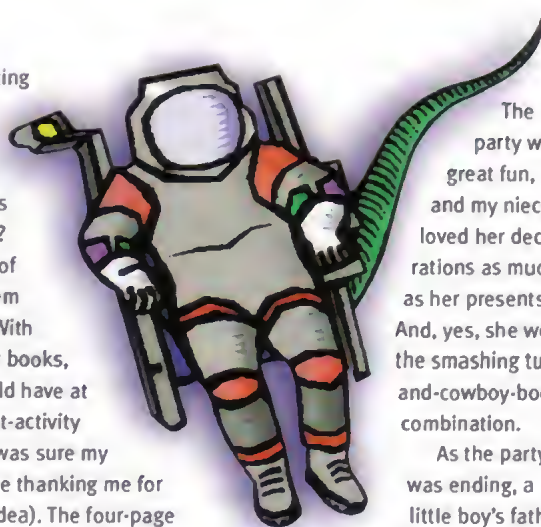
Hooked on graphics

The basic decorations were finished, but I couldn't stop. I'd thought of so many great ideas that I just kept going. I made coloring books out of the



half-fold greeting card. You know how you keep 5-year-old kids in their chairs? I mean, short of rope? Give them plenty to do. With these coloring books, the party would have at least one quiet-activity option (and I was sure my sister would be thanking me for that brilliant idea). The four-page coloring books had inviting items to color as well as places to draw a favorite animal, food, toy, or person. I even made place cards and place mats with the names of each girl and boy attending the party.

Most of these ideas were not mine. Once I got into *Print Artist*, the 4,000 ready-made layouts got me thinking, and the ease of using the program got me creating.



The party was great fun, and my niece loved her decorations as much as her presents. And, yes, she wore the smashing tutu-and-cowboy-boots combination.

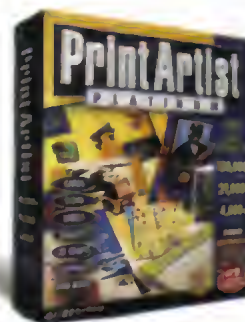
As the party was ending, a little boy's father

came up to me and asked where I had gotten the decorations. It seems his little boy was turning five in a month and he loves both dinosaurs and astronauts.

"Uh, I'm pretty sure they don't make that," I said.

He looked a little disappointed.

"But," I continued, "have you heard of *Print Artist*?"



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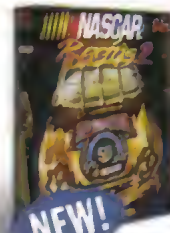
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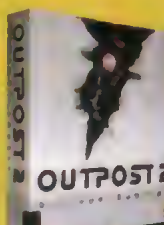


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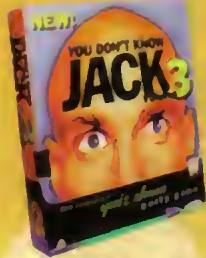
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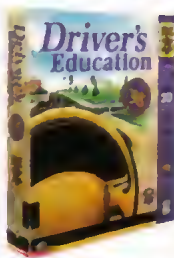


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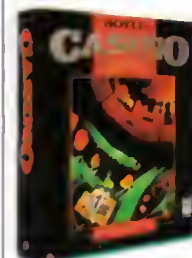
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SAVE \$10

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Computer Store Scams

IT'S TIME TO FIGHT BACK!

Have you ever gone to a computer store and ended up with the wrong PC or part? You're not alone.

SOME PACKARD BELL customers did not get the completely new machines they paid for. You see, cost-cutting geniuses at PB sneaked used parts into some "new" machines, and owners learned of this only if they read the fine print inside the box. The company eventually promised state attorney generals not to recycle in the future without alerting prospective buyers. And Packard Bell (actually, it's now Packard Bell NEC) claims to have raised its quality standards. No longer, in fact, does the Web teem with as many hate pages of the "Packard Bell sucks!" ilk. But the damage lingers. People's hard drives from purchases of several years ago are still crashing.



"Via the Yahoo! index, you can key in the name of a manufacturer and look for Web pages from outraged consumers."

What's the lesson here? Know what you buy at the computer store or wherever else you get your machine. For every major vendor caught at shenanigans of various kinds, you can bet there are hundreds of mom-and-pop screwdriver

shops up to the same antics. Misabeled "new" computers are just one consumer threat. How many times have you walked into stores that advertised one kind of merchandise but actually stocked a different and perhaps more expensive item? Below are six ways to get what you want and need when shopping for a computer:

1. Do your homework.

Use the Internet to check out a company's reputation for meeting specs. (If you're not hooked up at home, go to a library.) Via the Yahoo! index (www.yahoo.com), you can key in the name of a manufacturer and look for Web pages from outraged consumers. And through an outfit called TileNet (tile.net) you can find relevant lists and newsgroups. You can also try the Deja News search engine (www.dejanews.com) and use the company's name and words such as "con" and "rip-off" to see what oozes up from the newsgroups.

If the company is local and you can post to a local newsgroup, ask about its reputation for honestly labeling merchandise. Along the way you can also inquire about technical support and other issues.

2. Do some more homework!

Check out the retailer in question with the Better Business Bureau. The BBB site (www.bbb.org) includes links to 130 local bureaus (www.bbb.org/bureaus/index.html). The BBB also offers tips for computer buyers, as does the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov).

3. Get it in writing.

At the store, insist on written price quotes, so you'll know you're considering a \$995 machine, not one for \$1,195. Otherwise the quote may self-destruct as soon as you leave the store. In the same vein, make copies of all paperwork that you send away to collect rebates.

4. See for yourself.

Before you accept delivery of the machine, open up the box and look closely at the model number. (If a store won't let you do this, consider going to another store.) See if there's paperwork showing the true origins of the computer. That's especially important if you're buying an off-brand machine but at the same time want to make certain it isn't a clone. Beware! Even minor brands may offer better warranty policies than their clones.

5. Look under the hood.

When you get home, use Norton Utilities or other software to make certain that your new computer's main chip and other key parts are the right ones.

6. Get only what you want to pay for.

If you're following up on an advertisement and the store does not have what you came for, try for a rain check and watch out for excuses. Realize, of course, that companies can err unwittingly. For example, a national chain may advertise an item, but a local store may not receive it in time or at all.

Just the same, an honest manufacturer or store shouldn't just try to give the customers what they expect. It should go all out to succeed. **A**

Consumer watchdog David H. Rothman is author of NetWorld! (Primo Publishing) and other industry-related books. Write him at rathmon@clark.net.

THINGS TO DO TODAY

- I. ROUND UP PEOPLE FOR THE LION PITS.
- II. VISIT FORUM TO ASSESS CITY'S FINANCES.
- III. PRACTICE WAVING TO THE PEOPLE (IN ADORING FASHION).
- IV. HIRE VOICE COACH TO HELP PRACTICE EVIL LAUGHTER.
- V. MEET WITH CHIEF ARCHITECT/ARTISANS TO DISCUSS NEW COLOSSEUM.
- VI. SEND EMPEROR A BASKET OF POISONED FRUIT.
- VII. INSPECT GLADIATORS FOR THIS THURSDAY'S BLOODFEST AT THE COLOSSEUM.
- VIII. RAISE TAXES TO FUND MORE TAX COLLECTORS.
- IX. LECTURE PUBLIC ON BENEFITS OF PROCREATING.
- X. HIRE MORE VIGILS TO PATROL THE SLUMS.
- XI. MEET CLEOPATRA FOR DINNER (THIS MIGHT BE THE NIGHT!)
- XII. STAGE A FUNNY THING TO HAPPEN ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM.
- XIII. ABSOLUTELY DON'T FORGET TO...



CENTURION

This fruit basket looks absolutely delicious! It's awfully nice of you to have me deliver it to your arch rival. I thought you hated each other?

I wonder if anyone would notice an apple missing...

PIG FARMER

Gotta wash the stench of horse manure out of my clothes in time for church! There will be a lot of single ladies at Venus' temple tonight. Rumor has it the priest is going to denounce birth control!

PRIEST

Dedicating the temple to Venus was a smart move. Church attendance hasn't been this high in years! Then again, neither has the city's population.

LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE!

LION TAMER

Tipping the vigil off to arrest plebs for loitering was ingenious! Its much cheaper to feed my lions prisoners than the meat from that farmer. We'll see how long those gladiators last against my boys now!

VIGIL

I'm being transferred back to the slums for riot control – the Lion Tamer tipped me a gold piece to round up some fresh meat for his pets.

TAX COLLECTOR

If you are planning to build a new Colosseum as I suspect, you'll need a lot more money, and a lot more guys like me to gather it. People who think taking candy from a baby is wrong just haven't bothered to try it.

- Build, rule and battle on one screen—no more switching between city, province and battle screens!
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